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CUDJO'S CAVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOLMASTER IN TROUBLE.

CARL crept stealthily up the bank, and, peering through the window, saw the master writing at his desk.

In his neat Quaker garb, his slender form bent over his task, his calm young face dimly seen in profile, there he sat. The room was growing dark; the glow of a March sunset was fading fast from the paper on which the swift pen traced these words:—

"Tennessee is getting too hot for me. My school is nearly broken up, and my farther stay here is becoming not only useless, but dangerous. There are many loyal men in the neighbourhood, but they are overawed by the reckless violence of the secessionists. Mobs sanctioned by self-styled vigilance committees override all law and order. As I write I can hear the yells of a drunken rabble before my school-house door. I am an especial object of hatred to them on account of my Northern birth and principles. They have warned me to leave the state, they have threatened me with Southern vengeance, but thus far I have escaped injury. How long this reign of terror is to last, or what is to be the end——"

A rap on the window drew the writer's attention, and, looking up, he saw against the twilight sky the broad German face of the boy Carl darkening the pane. He stepped to raise the sash.

"What is it, Carl?"

The lad glanced quickly around, first over one shoulder then the other, and said in a hoarse whisper—

"Shpeak vair low!"

"Was it you that rapped before?"

"I have rapped tree times, not loud, pecause I vas afraid the men vould hear."

"What men are they?"

"The Veegilance Committee's men! They have some tar in a kettle.

They haf made a fire unter it, and I hear some of 'em say, 'Run, boys, and pring some fedders.'"

"Tar and feathers!" The young man grew pale. "They have threatened it, but they will not dare!"

"They vill dare do anything, but you shall prevent 'em! See vat I have prought you!" Carl opened his jacket and showed the handle of a revolver. "Stackridge sent it."

"Hide it! hide it!" said the master quickly. "He offered it to me himself. I told him I could not take it."

"He said maybe ven you smell tar and see fedders you vill change your mind," answered Carl.

The schoolmaster smiled. The pallor of fear which had surprised him for an instant had vanished.

"I believe in a different creed from Mr. Stackridge's, honest man as he is. I shall not resist evil, but overcome evil with good, if I can; if I cannot, I shall suffer it."

"You show that you vill shoot some of 'em, and they vill let you go," said Carl, not understanding the nobler doctrine. "Shooting vill do some of them villains some good!" his placid blue eyes kindling as if he would like to do a little of the shooting. "You take it."

"No," said the young man firmly. "Such weapons are not for me."

"Vair vell!" Carl buttoned his jacket over the revolver. "Then you come mit me, if you please. Get out of the vinder and run. That is pest I suppose."

"No, no, my lad. I may as well meet these men first as last."

"Then I vill go and pring help!" suddenly exclaimed the boy, and away he scampered across the fields, leaving the young man alone in the darkening schoolroom.

It was not a very pleasant situation to be in, you may well believe. As he closed the sash a faint odour of tar was wafted in on the evening breeze. The voices of the ruffians at the door grew louder and more menacing. He knew they were only waiting for the tar to heat, for the shadows of night to thicken, and for him to make his appearance. He returned to his desk, but it was now too dark to write. He could barely see to sign his name and address the envelope. This done, he buttoned his straight-fitting brown coat, put on his modest hat, and stood pondering in his mind what he should do.

A young man scarcely twenty years old, reared in the quiet atmosphere of a community of Friends, and as unaccustomed hitherto to scenes of strife and violence as the most innocent child—such was Penn Hapgood, teacher of the "Academy" (as the school was proudly named) in Curryville. This

was the first great trial of his faith and courage. He had not taken Carl's advice and ran, because he did not believe that he could escape the danger in that way. And as for fighting, that was not in his heart any more than it was in his creed. But to say that he did not dread to meet his foes at the door, that he felt no fear, would be speaking falsely. He was afraid. His entire nature, delicate body and still more delicate soul, shrank from the ordeal. He went to the outer door and laid his hand on the bolt, but could not for a long time summon resolution to open it.

As he hesitated there came a loud thump on one of the panels which nearly crushed it in, and filled the hollow building with ominous echoes.

"Make ready in thar, you hound of an abolitionist!" shouted a brutal voice; "we're about ready fur ye!"

Penn's hand drew back. I dare say it trembled; I dare say his face turned white again as he felt the danger so near. How could he confront, with his sensitive spirit, those merciless, coarse men?

"I'll wait a little," he thought within himself. "Perhaps Carl *will* bring help."

There were good sturdy Unionists in the place—men who, unlike the Pennsylvania schoolmaster, believed in opposing evil with evil, force by force. Only last night one of them entered this very schoolroom, bolted the door carefully, and sat down to unfold to the young master a scheme for resisting the plans of the secessionists. It was a league for circumventing treason—for keeping Tennessee in the Union—for preserving their homes and families from the horrors of the impending civil war. The conspirators had arms concealed; they met in secret places; they were watching for the hour to strike. Would the schoolmaster join them? Strange to say, they believed in him as a man who had abilities as a leader—"an undeveloped fighting man"—he, Penn Hapgood, the Quaker! Penn smiled as he declined the farmer's offer of a commission in the secret militia, and refused to accept the weapon of self-defence which the same earnest Unionist had proffered him again, through Carl, the German boy, this night.

Penn thought of these men now, and hoped that Carl would haste and bring them to the rescue. Then immediately he blushed at his own cowardly inconsistency, for something in his heart said that he ought not to wish others to do for him what he had conscientious scruples against doing for himself.

"I'll go out!" he said sternly to his trembling heart.

But he would first make a reconnoissance through the keyhole. He looked, and saw one ruffian stirring the fire under the tar kettle, another displaying a rope, and two others alternately drinking from a bottle. He

started back as the thundering on the panel was repeated, and the same voice roared out—

"You kin be takin' off them clo'es of yourn! the tar is about het!"

"I'll wait a few moments longer for Carl," said Penn to himself, with a long breath.

Unfortunately, Carl was not just now in a situation to render much assistance. Although he had arrived unseen at the window, he did not retire undiscovered. He had run but a short distance when a gruff voice ordered him to stop. He had a way, however, of misunderstanding English when he chose, and interpreted the command to mean, run faster. Receiving it in that sense, he obeyed. Somebody behind him began to run too. In short, it was a chase, and Carl, glancing backwards, saw long-legged Silas Ropes, one of the ringleaders of the mob, taking appalling strides after him across the open field.

There were some woods about a quarter of a mile away, and Carl made for them, trusting to their shelter and the shades of night to favour his escape. He was fifteen years old, strong, and an excellent runner. He did not again look behind to see if Silas was gaining on him, but attended strictly to his own business, which was to get into the thickets as soon as possible. His success seemed almost certain; a few rods more, and the undergrowth would be reached; and he was congratulating himself on having thus led away from the schoolmaster one of his most desperate enemies, when he rushed suddenly almost into the arms of two men, or rather into a feather-bed which they were fetching, by the corner of the wood lot.

"Ketch that Dutchman!" roared Silas. And they "ketched" him.

"What's the Dutchman done?" said one of the men, throwing himself lazily on the feather-bed while his companion held Carl for his pursuer.

"I don't know," said Carl, opening his eyes with placid wonder. "I tought he vas vanting to run a race mit me."

"A race, you fool!" said Silas, seizing and shaking him. "Didn't you hear me tell ye to stop?"

"Did you say *shtop?*" asked Carl with a broad smile. "It ish vair queer ven it sounded as if you said *shtep!* so I *shtepped* just as fast as I could."

"What was you thar at the winder fur?"

"Vot vinder?" said Carl.

"Of the Academy," said Silas.

"Oh, to pe sure! I vas there," said Carl, "pecause I left my books in there last veek, and I vas going to get 'em, but I saw somepody in the house, and I vas afraid."

"Wasn't it the schoolmaster?"

"I shouldn't be vair much surprised if it vas the schoolmaster," said Carl with blooming simplicity.

"You lying rascal! What did you say to him through the winder?"

Carl looked all around with an expression of mild wonder, as if expecting somebody else to answer.

"Why don't you speak?"

And Silas gave his arm a fierce wrench.

"Vat did you say?"

"I said, 'You lying rascal——'"

"That is not my name," said Carl, "and I tought you vas shpeaking to somebody else; I tought you vas conversing mit this man"—pointing at the fellow on the bed.

"Dan Pepperill!" said Silas, turning angrily on the recumbent figure, "what are you stretching your lazy bones thar fur? We're waiting fur them feathers, and you'll git a coat yourself if you don't show a little more of the sperrit of a gentleman! You don't act as if your heart was in this yer act of duty we're performin' any more'n as if you was a Northern mudsill yourself!"

"Wal, the truth is," said Dan Pepperill, reluctantly getting up from the bed, and preparing to shoulder it, "the schoolmaster has allus treated me well, and though I hate his principles——"

"You don't hate his principles, neither! You're more'n half a abolitionist yourself! And I swear to gosh," said Silas, "if you don't do your part now——"

"I will! I'm a-going to!" said Dan, with something like a groan. "Though, as I said, he has allus used me well——"

"Shet up!" Silas administered a kick, which Dan adroitly caught in the bed. Mr. Ropes got his foot embarrassed in the feathers, lost his balance, and fell. Dan, either by mistake or design, fell also, tumbling the bed in a smothering mass over the screaming mouth and coarse red nose of the prostrate Silas.

The third man, who was guarding Carl, began to laugh. Carl laughed too, as if it was the greatest joke in the world, to enhance the fun of which, he gave his man a sudden push forwards, tripped him as he went, and so flung him headlong upon the struggling heap. This pleasant feat accomplished, he turned to run, but changed his mind almost instantly, and instead of plunging into the undergrowth, threw himself upon the accumulating pile.

There he scrambled and kicked, with his heels in the air, and rolled over the topmost man, who rolled over Mr. Pepperill, who rolled over the

feather-bed, which rolled again over Mr. Ropes in a most lively and edifying manner.

At this interesting juncture Carl's reason for changing his mind and remaining became manifest. Two more of the chivalry from the tar-kettle came rushing to the spot, and would speedily have seized him had he attempted to get off. So he stayed, thinking he might be helping the master in this way as well as any other.

And now the miscellaneous heap of legs and feathers began to resolve itself into its original elements. First Carl was pulled off by one of the new comers; then Dan and the man Carl had sent to comfort him fell to blows, clinched each other, and rolled upon the earth; and lastly, Mr. Silas Ropes arose, choked with passion and feathers, from under the rent and bursting bed. The two squabbling men were also quickly on their feet, Mr. Pepperill proving too much for his antagonist.

"What did you pitch into me fur?" demanded Silas, threatening his friend Dan.

"What did Gad pitch into me fur?" said the irate Dan, shaking his fist at Gad.

"What did you push and jump on to me fur?" said Gad, clutching Carl, who was still laughing.

Thus the wrath of the whole party was turned against the boy.

"Pless me!" said he, staring innocently, "I tought it vas all for shport."

The furious Mr. Ropes was about to convince him, by some violent act, of his mistake, when cries from the direction of the school-house called his attention.

"See what's there, boys!" said Silas.

"Durn me," said Mr. Pepperill, looking across the field as he brushed the feathers from his clothes, "if it ain't the master himself!"

In fact, Penn had by this time summoned courage to slip back the bolt, throw open the school-house door, and come out.

The gentlemen who were heating the tar and drinking from the bottle were taken by surprise. They had not expected that the fellow would come out at all, but wait to be dragged out. Their natural conclusion was, that he was armed; for he appeared with as calm and determined a front as if he had been perfectly safe from injury himself, while it was in his power to do them some fatal mischief. They could not understand how the mere consciousness of his own uprightness, and a sense of reliance on the arm of eternal justice, could inspire a man with courage to face so many.

"My friends," said Penn, as they beset him with threats and

blasphemy, "I have never injured one of you, and you will not harm me."

And as if some deity held an invisible shield above him, he passed by, and they, in their astonishment, durst not even lay their hands upon him.

"I've hearn tell he was a Quaker, and wouldn't fight," muttered one; "but I see a revolver under his coat!"

"Where's Sile? Where's Sile Ropes?" cried others, who, though themselves unwilling to assume the responsibility of seizing the young master, would have been glad to see Silas attempt it.

Great was the joy of Carl when he saw Mr. Hapgood walking through the guard of ruffians untouched. But a moment after he uttered an involuntary groan of despair. It was Penn's custom to cross the fields in going from the Academy to the house where he boarded, and his path wound by the edge of the woods, where Silas and his accomplices were at the moment gathering up the spilt feathers.

"All right!" said Mr. Ropes, crouching down in order to remain concealed from Penn's view. "This is as comf'table a place to do our dooty by him as any to be found. Keep dark, boys, and let him come!"

CHAPTER II.

PENN AND THE RUFFIANS.

PENN traversed the field, followed by the gang from the school-house. As he approached the woods, Silas and his friends rose up before him. He was thus surrounded.

"Thought you'd come and meet us half way, did ye?" said Mr. Ropes, striding across his path. "Very accommodating in you, to be shore!" And he laughed a brutal laugh, which was echoed by all his friends except Dan.

"I have not come to meet you," replied Penn, "but I am going about my own private business, and wish to pass on."

"Wal, you can't pass on till we've settled a small account with you that's been standing a little too long a'ready. Bring that tar, some on ye! Come, Pepperill! show your sperrit!"

This Pepperill was a ragged, lank, starved-looking man, whose appearance was on this occasion rendered ludicrous by the feathers sticking all over him, and by an expression of dejection which *would* draw down the corners of his miserable mouth and roll up his piteous eyes, notwithstanding his efforts to appear what Silas termed "sperrited."

"You too among my enemies, Daniel!" said Penn reproachfully.

It was a look of grief, not of anger, which he turned on the wretched man. Poor Pepperill could not stand it.

"I own, I own," he stammered forth, a picture of mingled fear and contrition, "you've allus used me well, Mr. Hapgood—but," he hastened to add, with a scared look at Silas, "I hate your principles!"

"Look here, Dan Pepperill!" remarked Mr. Ropes with grim significance, "you'd better shet your yaup, and be a-bringin' that ar kittle!"

Dan groaned and departed. Penn smiled bitterly. "I have always used him well, and this is the return I get!" He thought of another evening, but little more than a week since, when, passing by this very path, he heard a deeper groan than that which the wretch had just uttered. He turned aside into the edge of the woods, and there beheld an object to excite at once his laughter and compassion. What he saw was this:—

Dan Pepperill astride a rail, his hands tied together above it, and his feet similarly bound beneath. The rail had been taken from a fence a mile away, and he had been carried all that distance on the shoulders of some of these very men. They had taken turns in carrying him, and when tired at last, had placed the rail in the forks of two convenient saplings, and there left him. The crotch in front was considerably higher than that behind, which circumstance gave him the appearance of clinging to the back of an animal in the act of rearing frightfully, and exposed a delicate part of his apparel that had been sadly rent by contact with splinters. And there the wretch was clinging and groaning when Penn came up.

"For the love of the Lord," said Dan, "take me down!"

"Why, what is the matter? How came you here?"

"I'm a dead man; that's the matter! I've been whipped to death, and then rode on a rail; that's the way I come here!"

"Whipped! what for?" said Penn, losing no time in cutting the sufferer's bonds.

"Ye see," said Dan, when taken down and laid upon the ground, "the patrol-men found Combs's boy Pete out t'other night without a pass, and took him and tied him to a tree, and licked him."

The "boy Pete" was a negro man upwards of fifty years old, owned by the said Combs.

"Wal, ye see, jest cause I found him, and took him home with me, and washed his back fur him, and bound cotton on to it, and kep' him overnight, and gin him a good breakfast, and a drink o' suthin' strong in the morning, and then went home with him, and talked with his master so'st

he wouldn't get another licking—just for that, Sile Ropes and his gang took me and served me wus'n ever they served *him!*" And the broken-spirited man cried like a child at the recollection of his injuries.

He was one of the "white trash" of the South whom even the negroes belonging to good families look down upon—a weak, degraded, kind-hearted man, whose offence was not simply that he had shown mercy to the "boy Pete" after his flogging, but that he associated on familiar terms with such negroes as were not too proud to cultivate his acquaintance, and secretly sold them whiskey. After repeated warnings he had been flogged and treated to a ride on a three-cornered rail, and hung up to reflect upon his ungentlemanly conduct and its sad consequences.

At the sight of him, Penn, who knew nothing of his selling whiskey to the blacks, or of any other offence against the laws or prejudices of the community than that of befriending a beaten and bleeding slave, felt his indignation roused and his sympathies excited.

"It's a dreadful state of society in which such outrages are tolerated!" he exclaimed.

"*I* say, dreadful!" sobbed Mr. Pepperill.

"The good Samaritan himself would be in danger of a beating here!" said Penn.

"I don't know what good smart 'un you mean," replied the weeping Dan, whose knowledge of Scripture was extremely limited, "but I bet he'd git some, ef he didn't keep his eyes peeled!" And he wiped his nose with his sleeve.

Penn smiled at the man's ignorance, and said, as he lifted him up—

"Friend Daniel, do you know that it is partly your own fault that this deplorable state of things exists?"

"How's it my fault, I'd like to know?" whimpered Daniel.

"Come, I'll help thee home, and tell thee what I mean by the way," said Penn, using the idiom of his sect, into which familiar manner of speech he naturally fell when talking confidentially with any one.

"I am stiff as any old spavined hoss!" whined the poor fellow, straightening his legs, and attempting to walk.

Penn helped him home as he promised, and comforted him, and said to him many things which he little supposed were destined to be brought against him so soon, and by this very Daniel Pepperill.

This was the way of it. When it was known that Penn had befriended the friend of the blacks, Silas Ropes paid Dan a second visit, and by threats of vengeance on the one hand, and promises of forgiveness and treatment "like a gentleman" on the other, extorted from him a confession of all Penn had said and done.

"Now, Dan," said Mr. Ropes patronisingly, "I'll tell ye what you do. You jine with us, and show yourself a man of sperrit, a-payin' off this yer abolitionist for his outrageous interference in our affairs."

"Sile," interrupted Dan earnestly, "what 'ge mean I'm to do? Turn agin' him?"

"Exactly," replied Mr. Ropes.

"Sile," said Dan excitedly, "I be durned if I do!"

"Then I swear to gosh!" said Sile, spitting a great stream of tobacco-juice across Mrs. Pepperill's not very clean floor, "you'll have a dose yourself before another sun, which like as not'll be your last!"

This terrible menace produced its desired effect, and the unwilling Dan was here this night, one of Penn's persecutors, in consequence.

It was not enough that he had shown his "sperrit" by fetching the victim's own bed from his boarding-house, telling his landlady, the worthy Mrs. Sprowl, that Sile said she must "charge it to her abolition boarder." He must now show still more "sperrit" by bringing the tar. A well-worn broom had been borrowed of Mrs. Pepperill by those who knew best how the tar in such cases should be applied: the handle of this was thrust by one of the men, named Griffin, through the bail of the kettle, and Dan was ordered to "ketch holt o' t'other eend," and help carry.

Dan "ketched holt" accordingly. But never was kettle so heavy as that; its miserable weight made him groan at every step. Suddenly the broom-handle slipped from his hand, and down it went. No doubt his laudable object was to spill the tar, in order to gain time for his benefactor, and perhaps postpone the tarring and feathering altogether. But Griffin grasped the kettle in time to prevent its upsetting, and the next instant flourished the club over Dan's head.

"I didn't mean tu! it slipped!" shrieked the terrified wretch. After which he durst no more attempt to thwart the chivalrous designs of his friends, but carried the tar like a gentleman.

"This way!" said Silas, getting the escaped feathers into a pile with his foot. "Thar! set it down. Now, sir," throwing away his own coat, "peel off them clo'es o' yourn, Mr. Schoolmaster, mighty quick, if you don't want 'em peeled off fur ye!"

Penn gave no sign of compliance, but fixed his eye steadfastly on Mr. Ropes.

"I insist," said he—for he had already made the request while the men were bringing the tar—"on knowing what I have done to merit this treatment."

"Wal, that I don't mind tellin' ye," said Silas, "for we've all night for this yer little job before us. Dan Pepperill, stand up here!"

Dan came forward, appearing extremely low-spirited, and weak in the knees.

"Is it you, Daniel, who are to bear witness against me?" said Penn, in a voice of singular gentleness, which chimed in like a sweet and solemn bell after the harsh clangour of Silas's ruffian tones.

Dan rolled up his eyes, hugged his tattered elbows, and gave a dismal groan.

"Come!" said Silas, bestowing a slap on his back which nearly knocked him down, "straighten them knees o' yourn, and be a man. Yes, Mr. Schoolmaster, Dan is a-going to bear witness agin you. He has turned from the error of his ways, and now his noble Southern heart is a-burnin' to take vengeance on all the enemies of his beloved country. Ain't it, Dan?—say yes," he hissed in his ear, giving him a second slap, "or else—you know!"

"O Lord, yes!" ejaculated Dan, with a start of terror. "What Mr. Ropes says is perfectly—perfectly—jes' so!"

"Your heart is a-burnin', ain't it?" said Silas.

"Ye—yes! I be durned if it ain't!" said Dan.

"This man," continued Ropes, who prided himself on being a great orator, with power to "fire the Southern heart," and never neglected an occasion to show himself off in that capacity—"this individgle ye see afore ye, gentlemen"—once more hitting Dan, this time with the toe of his boot, gently, to indicate the subject of his remarks—"was lately as low-minded a peep as ever you see. He had no more conscience than to 'sociate with niggers, and sell 'em liquor, and even give 'em liquor when they couldn't pay fur 't; and you all know how he degraded himself by takin' Combs's Pete into his house and doin' for him arter he'd been very properly licked by the patrol. All which, I am happy to say, the deluded man sincerely repents of, and promises to behave more like a gentleman in futur'. Don't you, Dan?"

As Dan, attempting to speak, only gasped, Ropes administered a sharp poke in the ribs, whispering fiercely—

"Say you do, mighty quick, or I'll——"

"O! I repents! I—I be durned if I don't!" said Dan.

"And now, as to you!" Silas turned on the schoolmaster. "Your offence in gineral is being a Northern abolitionist. Besides which, your offences in partic'ler is these. Not contented with teachin' the Academy, which was well enough, since it is necessary that a few should have larnin', so they may know how to govern the rest—not contented with that, you must run the thing into the ground by settin' up a evenin' school, and offerin' to larn readin', writin', and 'rithmetic, free gratis, to whosomever

wanted to 'tend. Which is contrary to the sperrit of our institootions, as you have been warned more 'n oncet. That's charge Number Two. Charge Number Three is, that you stand up for the old rotten Union, and tell folks, every chance you git, that secession, that noble right of Southerners, is a villainous scheme that'll ruin the South if persisted in, and plunge the whole nation into war. Your very words, I believe. Can you deny it?"

"Certainly I have said something very much like that, and it is my honest conviction," replied Penn firmly.

"Gentlemen, take notice!" said Mr. Ropes. "We will now pass on to charge Number Four, and be brief, for the tar is a-coolin'. Suthin' like eight days ago, when the afore-mentioned Dan Pepperill was in the waller of his degradation, some noble-souled sons of the sunny South"—the orator smiled with pleasant significance—"lifted him up, and hung him up to air, in the crotches of two trees, jest by the edge of the woods here, and went home to supper, intending to come back and finish the purifying process begun with him later in the evenin'. But what did *you* do, Mr. Schoolmaster, but come along and take him down prematoorely, and go to corruptin' him agin with your vile Northern principles! Didn't he, Dan?"

"I—I dun know," faltered Dan.

"Yes, you do know, too! Didn't he corrupt you?"

These words being accompanied by a severe hint from Sile's boot, Mr. Pepperill remembered that Penn *did* corrupt him.

"And if I hadn't took ye in season, you'd have returned to your base-born mire, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose I would," the miserable Dan admitted.

"Wal now!"—Sile spread his palm over the tar to see if it retained its temperature—"hurry up, Dan, and tell us all this Northern agitator said to you that night."

"O Lord!" groaned Pepperill, "my memory is so short!"

"Bring that rope, boys! and give him suthin' to stretch it!" said Silas, growing impatient.

Dan, knowing that stretching his memory in the manner threatened implied that his neck was to be stretched along with it, made haste to remember.

"My friends," said Penn, interrupting the poor man's forced and disconnected testimony, "let me spare him the pain of bearing witness against me. I recall perfectly well everything I said to him that night. I said it was a shame that such outrages as had been committed on him should be tolerated in a civilised society. I told him it was partly his own fault that such a state of things existed. I said, 'It is owing to the

ignorance and degradation of you poor whites that a barbarous system is allowed to flourish and tyrannise over you.' I said——"

But here Penn was interrupted by a violent outcry, the majority of the persons present coming under the head of "poor whites."

"Let him go on! let him perceed!" said Silas. "What did you mean by 'barbarous system?'"

"I meant," replied Penn, all fear vanishing in the glow of righteous indignation which filled him—"I meant the system which makes it a crime to teach a man to read—a punishable offence to befriend the poor and down-trodden, or to bind up wounds. A system which makes it dangerous for one to utter his honest opinions, even in private, to a person towards whom he is at the same time showing the mercy which others have denied him." He looked at Dan, who groaned. "A system——"

"Wal, I reckon that'll do fur one spell," broke in Silas Ropes. "You've said more 'n enough to convict you, and to earn a halter 'stead of a mild coat of tar and feathers."

"I am well aware," said Penn, "that I can expect no mercy at your hands, so I thought I might as well be plain with you."

"And plain enough you've been, I swear to gosh!" said Silas. "Boys, strip him!"

"Wait a moment!" said Penn, putting them off with a gesture which they mistook for an appeal to some deadly weapon in his pocket. "What I have said has been to free my mind, and to save Daniel trouble. Now allow me to speak a few words in my own defence. I have committed no crime against your laws; if I have, why not let the laws punish me?"

"We take the laws into our hands sech times as these," said the man called Gad.

"You're an abolitionist, and that's enough," said another.

"If I do not believe slavery to be a good thing, it is not my fault; I cannot help my belief. But one thing I will declare. I have never interfered with your institution in any way at all dangerous to you, or injurious to your slaves. I have not rendered them discontented, but, whenever I have had occasion, I have counselled them to be patient and faithful to their masters. I came among you a peaceable man, a simple schoolmaster, and I have tried to do good to everybody, and harm to no one. With this motive I opened an evening school for poor whites. How many men here have any education? How many can read and write? Not many, I am sure."

"What's the odds, so long as they're men of the true sperrit?" interrupted Silas Ropes. "I can read for one, and as for the rest, what

good would it do 'em to be edecated? 'Twould only make 'em jes' sech low, sneakin', thievin' white slaves, like the greasy mechanics at the North."

"The white slaves are not at the North," said Penn. "Education alone makes free men. If you, who threaten me with violence here to-night, had the common school education of the North, you would not be engaged in such business; you would be ashamed of assaulting a peaceable man on account of his opinions; you would know that the man who comes to teach you is your best friend. If you were not ignorant men, you, who do not own slaves, would know that slavery is the worst enemy of your prosperity, and you would not be made its willing tools."

The firm dignity of the youth, assisted by the illusion that prevailed concerning a revolver in his pocket, had kept his foes at bay, and gained him a hearing. He now attempted to pass on, when the man Gad, stepping behind him, raised the broom-handle, and dealt him a stunning blow on the back of the head.

"Down with him!" "Strip him!" "Give him a thrashing first!" "Hang him!"

And the ruffians threw themselves furiously upon the fallen man.

"Whar's that Dutch boy?" cried Silas. "I meant he should help Dan lay on the tar."

But Carl was nowhere to be seen, having taken advantage of the confusion and darkness to escape into the woods.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET CELLAR.

NO sooner did the Dutch boy feel himself safe from pursuit than he made his way out of the woods again, and ran with all speed to Mr. Stackridge's house.

To his dismay he learned that that stanch Unionist was absent from home.

"Is he in the village?" said the breathless Carl.

"I reckon he is," said the farmer's wife; adding in a whisper—for she guessed the nature of Carl's business—"inquire for him down to Barber Jim's." And she told him what to say to the barber.

Barber Jim was a coloured man, who had demonstrated the ability of the African to take care of himself by purchasing first his own freedom from his mistress, buying his wife and children afterwards, and then accumulating a property as much more valuable than all Silas Ropes and his poor white minions possessed as his mind was superior to their combined intelligence.

Jim had accomplished this by uniting with industrious habits a natural shrewdness which enabled him to make the most of his labour and of his means. He owned the most flourishing barber-shop in the place, and kept in connection with it (I am sorry to say) a bar, at which he dealt out to his customers some very bad liquors at very good prices.

Well, on this very evening Jim's place began to be thronged almost before it was dark. A few came in to be shaved, while many more passed through the shop into the little bar-room beyond. What was curious, some went in who appeared never to come out again, Mr. Stackridge among the number.

It was not to get shaved, nor yet to get tipsy, that this man visited Jim's premises. The moment they were alone together in the bar-room, he gave the proprietor a knowing wink.

"Many there?"

"I reckon about a dozen," said Jim. "Go in?" Stackridge nodded, and with a grin Jim opened a private door communicating with some back stairs, down which his visitor went groping his way in the dark.

Customers came and went; now and then one disappeared similarly down the back stairs; many remained in the barber's shop to smoke and discuss in loud tones the exciting question of the day—secession; when, lastly, a boy of fifteen came rushing in. His face was flushed with running, and he was quite out of breath.

"What's wanting, Carl?" said the barber. "A shave?"

This was one of Jim's jokes, at which his customers laughed, to the boy's confusion, for his cheeks were as smooth as a peach.

"I vants to find Mishter Stackridge," said the lad.

"He ain't here," said Jim, looking around the room.

"It is something very partic'lar. One of his pigs have got choked mit a cob, and he must go home and unchoke him."

This was what Carl had been directed by the farmer's wife to say to the barber, in case he should profess ignorance concerning her husband.

"Pity about the pig," said Jim. "Mabby Stackridge 'll be in bimeby. Anything else I can do for ye?"

Carl stepped up to the barber, and said in a hoarse whisper, loud enough to be heard by everybody—

"A mug of peer, if you pleashe."

"I got some that 'll make a Dutchman's head hum!" said Jim, leading the way into the little grog-room.

"That's Villars's Dutch boy," said one of the smokers in the barber-shop. "Beats all nater how these Dutch will swill down anything in the shape of beer!"

This elegant observation may have had a grain of truth in it, as we who have Teutonic friends may have reason to know. However, the man had mistaken the boy this time.

"It is not the peer I vants, it is Mr. Stackridge," whispered Carl, when alone with the proprietor.

Jim regarded him doubtfully a moment, then said, "I reckon I shall have to open a cask in the suller. You jest tend bar for me while I am gone."

He descended the stairs, closing the door after him. Carl, who thought of the schoolmaster in the hands of the mob, felt his heart swell and burn with anxiety at each moment's delay. Jim did not keep him long waiting.

"This way, Carl, if you want some of the right sort," said the negro from the stairs.

Carl went down in the darkness, Jim taking his hand to guide him They entered a cellar, crowded with casks and boxes, where there was a dim lamp burning; but no human being was visible, until suddenly out of a low, dark passage, between some barrels, a stooping figure emerged, giving Carl a momentary start of alarm.

"What's the trouble, Carl?"

"O! Mishter Stackridge! is it you?" said Carl, as the figure stood erect in the dim light—sallow, bony, grim, attired in coarse clothes. "The schoolmaster—that is the trouble!" and he hastily related what he had seen.

"Wouldn't take the pistol? the fool!" muttered the farmer. "But I'll see what I can do for him." He grasped the boy's collar, and said in a suppressed but terribly earnest voice, "Swear never to breathe a word of what I'm going to show you!"

"I shvair!" said Carl.

"Come!"

Stackridge took him by the wrist, and drew him after him into the passage. It was utterly dark, and Carl had to stoop in order to avoid hitting his head. As they approached the end of it, he could distinguish the sound of voices—one louder than the rest giving the word of command.

"*Order—arms!*"

The farmer knocked on the head of a cask, which rolled aside, and opened the way into a cellar beyond, under an old storehouse, which was likewise a part of Barber Jim's property.

The second cellar was much larger and better lighted than the first, and rendered picturesque by heavy festoons of cobwebs hanging from the dark beams above. The rays of the lamps flashed upon gun-barrels, and cast against the damp and mouldy walls gigantic shadows of groups of men. Some were conversing, others were practising the soldiers' drill.

"Neighbours!" said Stackridge, in a voice which commanded instant attention, and drew around him and Carl an eager group—"it's just as I told you—Ropes and his gang are lynching Hapgood!"

"It's the fellow's own fault," said a stern, dark man, the same who had been drilling the men; "he should have taken care of himself."

"Young Hapgood's a decent sort of cuss," said another whom Carl knew—a farmer named Withers—"and I like him. I believe he means well, but he ain't one of us."

"I've been deceived in him," said a third. "He always minded his own business, and kept so quiet about our institutions, I never suspected he was anti-slavery till I talked with him t'other day about joining us; then he out with it."

"He thinks we're all wrong," said a bigoted pro-slavery man named Deslow. "He says slavery's the cause of the war, and it's absurd in us to go in for the Union and slavery too."

For these men, though loyal to the government, and bitterly opposed to secession, were nearly all slaveholders or believers in slavery.

"Maybe the fellow ain't far wrong there," said he who had been drilling his comrades. "I think myself slavery's the cause of the war, and that's what puts us in such a hard place. The time may come when we will have to take a different stand—go the whole figure with the free North, or drift with the cotton states; but that time hain't come yet."

"But the time *has* come," said Stackridge impatiently, "to do something for Hapgood, if we intend to help him at all. While we are talking he may be hanging."

"And what can we do?" retorted the other. "We can't make a move for him without showing our hand, and it ain't time for that yet."

"True enough, Captain Grudd," said Stackridge, "but three or four of us, with our revolvers, can happen that way, and take him out of the hands of Ropes and his cowardly crew without much difficulty."

"Hapgood don't even believe in fighting!" observed Deslow with immense disgust, "and kill me if I am going to fight *for* him!"

Carl was almost driven to despair by the indifference of these men and the time wasted in discussion. He could have hugged the grim and bony Stackridge when he saw him make a decided move at last. Three others volunteered to accompany them. The cask was once more rolled away from the entrance, and one by one they crept quickly through the passage into the first cellar.

Stackridge preceded the rest, to see that the way was clear. There was no one at the bar, the door leading into the shop was closed, and Carl, following the four men, passed out by a long entry communicating with

the street, the door of which was thrown open to the public on occasions when there was a great rush to Jim's bar, but which was fastened this night by a latch which could be lifted only from the inside.

CHAPTER IV.

A SEARCH FOR THE MISSING.

THE academy was situated in a retired spot, half a mile out of the village. Stackridge and his party were soon pushing rapidly towards it along the dark, unfrequented road. Carl ran on before, leading the way to the scene of the lynching.

The place was deserted and silent. Only the cold wind swept the bleak woodside, making melancholy moans among the trees. Overhead shone the stars, lighting dimly the desolation of the ground.

"Now where's yer tar-and-feathering party?" said Stackridge. "See here, Dutchy! ye hain't been foolin' us, have ye?"

"I vish it vas notting but fooling!" said Carl, full of distress, fearing the worst. "We have come too late. The villains have took him off."

"Feathers, men!" muttered Stackridge, picking up something from beneath his feet. "The boy's right. Now, which way have they gone?—that's the question."

"Hark!" said Carl. "I see a man."

Indeed, just then a dim figure arose from the earth, and appeared slowly and painfully moving away.

"Hold on there!" cried Stackridge. "Needn't be afeared of us—we're your friends."

The figure stopped, uttering a deep groan.

"Is it you, Hapgood?"

"No," answered the most miserable voice in the world; "it's me."

"Who's *me*?"

"Pepperill—Dan Pepperill. Ye know me, don't ye, Stackridge?"

"You? You scoundrel!" said the farmer. "What have ye been doing to the schoolmaster? Answer me this minute, or I'll——"

"Oh, don't, don't!" implored the wretch. "I'll answer—I'll tell everything—only give me a chance."

"Be quick, then, and tell no lies!"

The poor man looked around at his captors in the starlight, stooping dejectedly, and rubbing his bent knees.

"I ain't to blame—I'll tell ye that to begin with. I've been jest knocked about, from post to pillar, and from pillar to post, till I don't

know who's my friends and who ain't. I reckon more ain't than is!" added he dismally.

"That's neither here nor there!" said Stackridge. "Where's Hapgood? that's what I want to know."

"Ye see," said Dan, endeavouring to collect his wits (you would have thought they were in his kneepans, and he was industriously rubbing them up), "Ropes sent me to tote the kittle home, and when I got back here I be durned if they wasn't all gone, schoolmaster and all."

"But what had they done to him?"

"I don't know, I'm shore! That's what I was a-comin' back fur to see. He let me down when I was hung up on the rail and helped me home, and so I says to myself, says I, 'Why shouldn't I do as much by him?' so I come back and found him gone."

"What was in the kittle?"

Stackridge took him by the throat.

"Oh, don't go fur to layin' it to me, and I'll tell ye! Thar'd been tar in the kittle! It had been used to give him a coat. That's the fact, durn me if it aint! They put it on with the broom—my broom—they made me bring my own broom, that's the everlastin' truth! made me do it myself, and spile my wife's best broom into the bargain!" And Pepperill sobbed.

"You put on the tar?"

"Don't kill me and I'll own up! I did put on some on't, that's a fact. Ropes would 'a' killed me if I hadn't, and now you kill me fur doin' of it. He did knock me down 'cause he said I didn't rub it on hard enough, and arter that he rubbed it himself."

"What next, you scoundrel?"

"Next they rolled him in feathers, and sent me, as I told ye, to tote the kittle home. Now don't, don't go fur to hang me, Mr. Stackridge. Help me, men! help me, Withers—Devit! For he means to be the death of me, I'm shore!"

Indeed, Stackridge was in a tremendous passion, and would no doubt have done the man some serious injury but for the timely interposition of Carl.

"Oh, you're a good boy, Carl!" cried Dan, in an ecstasy of terror and gratitude. "You know they druv me to it, don't ye? You know I wouldn't have gone fur to do it nohow if 't hadn't been to save my life. And as fur rubbing on the tar, I know'd they'd rub harder'n I did, so I took holt if only to do it more soft and gentle like."

Carl testified to Dan's apparent unwillingness to participate in the outrage, and Stackridge, finding that nothing more could be got out of the terror-stricken wretch, flung him off in great rage and disgust.

"We must find what they have done with Hapgood," he said. "We're losing time here. We'll go to his boarding-place first."

As Pepperill fell backwards upon some stones, and lay there helplessly, Carl ran to him to learn if he was hurt.

"Wal, I be hurt some," murmured Dan; "a good deal in my back, and a darned sight more in my feelin's. As if I wan't sufferin' a'ready the pangs of death—wus'n death!—a-thinkin' about the master, and what's been done to him, arter he'd been so kind to me—and thinkin' he'd think I'm the ongratefulest cuss out of the bad place!—and then to have it all laid on to me by Stackridge and the rest! that's the stun that hurts me wust of any!"

Carl thought if that was all he could not assist him much, and he ran on after the men, leaving Pepperill snivelling like a whipped schoolboy on the stones.

Penn's landlady, the worthy Mrs. Sprowl, lived in a lonesome house that stood far back in the fields, at least a dozen rods from the road. She was a widow, whose daughters were either married or dead, and whose only son was a rover, having been guilty of some crime that rendered it unsafe for him to visit his bereaved parent. Penn had chosen her house for his home, partly because she needed some such assistance in gaining a living, but chiefly, I think, because she did not own slaves. The other inmates of her solitary abode were two large ferocious dogs, which she kept for the sake of their company and protection.

But this night the house looked as if forsaken even by these. It was utterly dark and silent. When Stackridge shook the door, however, the illusion was dispelled by two fierce growls that resounded within.

"Hello! Mrs. Sprowl!" shouted the farmer, shaking the door again and knocking violently. "Let me in!"

At that the growling broke into savage barks, which made Stackridge lay his hand on the revolver Carl had returned to him. A window was then cautiously opened and a bit of nightcap exposed.

"If it's you agin," said a shrill feminine voice, "I warn you to be gone! If you think I can't set the dogs on you because you've slep' in my house so long you're very much mistaken. They'll tear you as they would a pa'tridge! Go away, go away, I tell ye; you've been the ruin of me, and I aint a-going to resk my life a-harbouring of you any longer."

"Mrs. Sprowl!" answered the stern voice of the farmer.

"Dear me! aint it the schoolmaster?" cried the astonished lady. "I thought it was him come back agin to force his way into my house, after I've twice forbid him!"

"Why forbid him?"

"Is it you, Mr. Stackridge? Then I'll be free and tell ye. I've been informed he's a dangerous man. I've been warned to shet my doors agin' him, if I wouldn't have my house pulled down on to my head."

"Who warned you?"

"Silas Ropes this very night. He come to me and says, says he, 'We've gin your abolition boarder a coat, which you must charge to his account;' for you see," added the head at the window pathetically, "they took the bed he has slep' on right out of my house, and I don't s'pose I shall see ary feather of that bed ever agin! live goose's feathers they was too! and a poor lone widder that could ill afford it!"

"Where is the master?"

"Wal, after Ropes and his friends were gone he comes too, an awful-lookin' object as ever you see! 'Mrs. Sprowl,' says he, 'don't be scared, it's only me; won't ye let me in?' for ye see, I'd shet the house agin' him in season, detarmined so dangerous a character should never darken my doors agin."

"And he was naked!"

"I s'pose he was, all but the feathers, and suthin' or other he seemed to have flung over him."

"Such a night as this!" exclaimed Stackridge. "You're a heartless jade, Mrs. Sprowl! I don't wonder the fellow hates slavery," he muttered to himself, "when it makes ruffians of the men and monsters even of the women!—Which way did he go?"

"That's more'n I can tell!" answered the lady sharply. "It's none o' my business where he goes, if he don't come here! That I won't have, call me what names you please!" And she shut the window.

"Hang the critter! after all Hapgood has done for her!" said the indignant Stackridge, for it was well known that she was indebted to the gentle and generous Penn for many benefits. "But it's no use to stand here. We'll go to my house, men—maybe he's there."

CHAPTER V.

CARL AND HIS FRIENDS.

CARL MINNEVICH was the son of a German, who, in company with a brother, had come to America a few years before, and settled in Tennessee. There the Minneviches purchased a farm, and were beginning to prosper in their new home, when Carl's father suddenly died. The boy had lost his mother on the voyage to America. He was now an orphan, destined to experience all the humiliation, dependence, and wrong which ever an orphan knew.

Immediately the sole proprietorship of the farm, which had been bought by both, was assumed by the surviving brother. This man had a selfish, ill-tempered wife, and a family of great boys. Minnevich himself was naturally a good, honest man; but Frau Minnevich wanted the entire property for her own children, hated Carl because he was in the way, and treated him with cruelty. His big cousins followed their mother's example, and bullied him. How to obtain protection or redress he knew not. He was a stranger, speaking a strange tongue, in the land of his father's adoption. Ah, how often then did he think of the happy fatherland, before that luckless voyage was undertaken, when he still had his mother, and his friends, and his little playfellows, whom he could never see more!

So matters went on for a year or two, until the boy's grievances grew intolerable, and he one day took it into his head to please Frau Minnevich for once in his life, if never again. In the night time he made up a little bundle of his clothes, threw it out of the window, got out himself after it, climbed down upon the roof of the shed, jumped to the ground, and trudged away in the early morning starlight, a wanderer. It has been necessary to touch upon this point in Carl's history in order to explain why it was he ever afterwards felt such deep gratitude towards those who befriended him in the hour of his need.

For many days and nights he wandered among the hills of Tennessee, looking in vain for work, and begging his bread. Sometimes he almost wished himself a slave-boy, for then he would have had a home at least, if only a wretched cabin, and friends, if only negroes—those oppressed, beaten, bought-and-sold, yet patient and cheerful people, whose lot seemed, after all, so much happier than his own. Carl had a large warm heart, and he longed with infinite longing for somebody to love him and treat him kindly.

At last, as he was sitting one cold evening by the roadside, weary, hungry, despondent, not knowing where he was to find his supper, and seeing nothing else for him to do but to lie down under some bush, there to shiver and starve till morning, a voice of unwonted kindness accosted him.

"My poor boy, you seem to be in trouble; can I help you?"

Poor Carl burst into tears. It was the voice of Penn Hapgood, and in its tones were sympathy, comfort, hope. Penn took him by the arm, and lifted him up, and carried his bundle for him, talking to him all the time so like a gentle and loving brother, that Carl said in the depths of his soul that he would some day repay him, if he lived; and he prayed God secretly that he might live, and be able some day to prove his gratitude for those sweet and gracious words.

Penn never quitted him until he had found him a home; neither after that did he forget him. He took him into his school, gave him instruction, and befriended him in a hundred little ways besides.

And now the time had arrived when Penn himself stood in need of friends. The evening came, and Carl was missing from his new home.

"Whar's dat ar boy took hisself to, I'd like to know!" scolded old Toby. "I'll clar away de table, and he'll lose his supper, if he stays anoder minute! Debil take me if I don't!"

He had made the same threat a dozen times, and still he kept Carl's potatoes hot for him, and the table waiting. For the old negro, though he loved dearly to show his importance by making a good deal of bluster about his work, had really one of the kindest hearts in the world, and was as devoted to the boy he scolded as any indulgent old grandmother.

"The 'debil' will take you, sure enough, I'm afraid, Toby, if you appeal to him so often," said a mildly reproving voice.

It was Mr. Villars, the old worn-out clergyman; a man of seventy winters, pale, white-haired, blind, feeble of body, yet strong and serene of soul. He came softly, groping his way into the kitchen, in order to put his feet to Toby's fire.

"Laws, massa," said old Toby, grinning, "debil knows I ain't in 'arnest! he knows better'n to take me at my word, for I speaks his name widout no kind o' respec', allus, I does. Hyar's yer ol' easy char fur ye, Mass' Villars. Now you jes' make yerself comf'table." And he cleared a place on the stove-hearth for the old man's feet.

"Thank you, Toby." With his elbows resting on the arms of the chair, his hands folded thoughtfully before his breast, and his beautiful old face smiling the kindness which his blind eyes could not *look*, Mr. Villars sat by the fire. "Where is Carl to-night, Toby?"

"Dat ar's de question—dat's de pint, massa. Mos' I can say is, he ain't whar he ought to be, a-eatin' ob his supper. Chocolate's all a-bilin' away to nuffin. Ketch dis chile tryin' to keep tings hot for his supper anoder time!" And Toby added, in a whisper expressive of great astonishment at himself—"What I eber took dat ar boy to keep fur's one ob de mysteries!"

For Toby, though only a servant (indeed, he had formerly been a slave in the family), had had his own way so long in everything that concerned the management of the household that he had come to believe himself the proprietor, not only of the house and land, and poultry and pigs, but of the family itself. He owned "ol' Mass Villars," and an exceedingly precious piece of property he considered him, especially since he had become blind. He was likewise (in his own exalted imagination) sole

inheritor and guardian-in-chief of "Miss Jinny," Mr. Villars's youngest daughter, child of his old age, of whom Mrs. Villars said, on her death-bed—"Take always good care of my darling, dear Toby"—an injunction which the negro regarded as a sort of last will and testament bequeathing the girl to him beyond mortal question.

There was, in fact, but one member of the household he did not exclusively claim. This was the married daughter, Salina, whose life had been embittered by a truant husband—no other, in fact, than the erring son of the worthy Mrs. Sprowl. The day when the infatuated girl made a marriage so much beneath the family dignity, Toby, in great grief and indignation, gave her up. "I washes my hands ob her!—she ain't no more a chile ob mine!" said the old servant, passionately weeping, as if the washing of his hands was to be literal, and no other fluid would serve his dark purpose but tears. And when, after Sprowl's desertion of her, she returned, humiliated and disgraced, to her father's house—that is to say, Toby's house—Toby had compassion on her, and took her in, but never set up any claim to her again.

"Where is Carl? Hasn't Carl come yet?" asked a sweet but very anxious voice. And Virginia, the youngest daughter, stood in the kitchen door.

"He hain't come yet, Miss Jinny—dat ar a fact!" said Toby. "'Pears like somefin's hap'en'd to dat ar boy. I neber knowed him stay out so when dar's any eatin' gwine on, for he's a master hand for his supper, dat boy ar. Laws, I hain't forgot how he laid in de vittles de fust night Massa Penn fetched him hyar! He was right hungry, he was, and he took holt powerful! 'I neber can keep dat ar boy in de world,' says I; 'he'll eat me clar out o' house an' home!' says I. But, arter all, it done my ol' heart good to see him put in, eberyting 'peared to taste so d'effle good to him!" And Toby chuckled at the reminiscence.

"My daughter," said Mr. Villars softly.

She was already standing behind his chair, and her trembling little hands were smoothing his brow, and her earnest face was looking pale and abstracted over him. He could not see her face, but he knew by her touch that the tender act was done somehow mechanically to-night, and that she was thinking of other things. She started as he spoke, and, bending over him, kissed his white forehead.

"I suspect," he went on, "that you know more of Carl than we do. Has he gone on some errand of yours?"

"I will tell you, father"—it seemed as if her feelings had been long repressed, and it was a relief for her to speak at last—"Carl came to me, and said there was some mischief intended towards Penn—this was long

before dark—and he asked permission to go and see what it was. I said, 'Go, but come straight back if there is no danger.' He went, and I have not seen him since."

"Is this so? Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because, father, I did not wish to make you anxious; but now, if you will let Toby go——"

"I'll go myself!" said the old man, starting up. "My staff, Toby! When I was out I heard voices in the direction of the schoolhouse. I felt then a presentiment that something was happening to Penn. I can control the mob; I can save him, if it is not too late."

He grasped the staff Toby put into his hand.

"Oh, father!" said the agitated girl, "are you able?"

"Able, child? You shall see how strong I am when our friend is in danger."

"Let me go, then, and guide you!" she exclaimed, glad he was so resolved, yet unwilling to trust him out of her sight.

"No, daughter. Toby will be eyes for me; yet I scarcely need even him. I can find my way as well as he can in the dark."

The negro opened the door, and was leading out the blind old minister, when the light from within fell upon a singular object approaching the house. It started back again, like some guilty thing, but Toby had seen it; Toby uttered a shriek.

"De debil! de debil hisself, massa!"

And he pulled the old man back hurriedly into the house.

"The devil, Toby? What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Villars.

"O laws bress ye, massa, ye hain't got no eyes, and ye can't see!" said Toby, shutting the door in his fright, and rolling his eyes wildly. "It's de bery debil! He's come for dis niggah dis time, sartin, 'cos I—'cos I 'pealed to him as you said, massa—'cos I's got de habit ob speakin' his name widout no kind o' respec'!"

And he stood bracing himself, with his back against the door, as if determined that not even that powerful individual himself should get in.

"You poor old simpleton!" said Mr. Villars, "there is no fiend except in your imagination. Open the door!"

"No, no, massa! He's dar! he's dar! He'll cotch old Toby, shore!"

And the terrified black held the latch and pushed with all his might.

"What did he see, Virginia?"

"I don't know, father. There was certainly somebody, or something—I could not distinguish what."

"It's what I tell ye," gibbered Toby. "I seed de great coarse har on

his speckled legs, and de wings on his back, and a right smart bag in his hand to put dis niggah in!"

"It might have been Carl," said Virginia.

"No, no! Carl don't hab such legs as dem ar! Carl don't hab sech great big large ears as dem ar! O good Lord! good Lord!"—the negro's voice sank to a terrified whisper—"he's a-knockin' for me now!"

"It's a very gentle rap for the devil," said Mr. Villars, who could not but be amused, notwithstanding the strange interruption of his purpose, and Toby's vexatious obstinacy in holding the door. "It's some stranger; let him in."

"No, no, no!" gasped the negro. "I won't say nuffin, and you tell him I ain't to home! Say I'se clar'd out—lef'—gone you do'no' whar!"

"Toby!" was called from without.

"Dat's his voice! dat ar's his voice!" said Toby, and in his desperate pushing he pushed his feet from under him, and fell at full length along the floor.

"It's the voice of Penn Hapgood!" exclaimed the old minister. "Arise quick, Toby, and open."

Toby rubbed his head and looked bewildered.

"Are ye sartin ob dat, massa? Bress me, I breeve you're right, for oncet! It *ar* Mass' Penn's voice, shore enough!"

He opened the door, but started back again with another shriek, convinced for an instant that it was, after all, the devil, who had artfully borrowed Penn's voice to deceive him.

But no! It was Penn himself, his hat and clothes in his hand, smeared with black tar and covered with feathers from head to foot; not even his features spared, nor yet his hair; on his cheeks great clumps of grey goose plumes, suggestive of diabolical ears; and with no other covering but this to shield him from the night wind, save the emptied bed-tick, which he had drawn over his shoulders, and which Toby had mistaken for Satanic wings.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE COAT FOR A QUAKER.

NOW Virginia Villars was the very last person by whom Penn would have wished to be seen. He was well aware how utterly grotesque and ludicrous he must appear. But he was not in a condition to be very fastidious on this point. Stunned by blows, stripped of his clothing (which could not be put on again, for reasons), cruelly suffering from the violence done him, exposed to the cold, excluded from Mrs. Sprowl's virtuous abode,

he had no choice but to seek the protection of those whom he believed to be his truest friends.

To the little sitting-room of the blind old minister he had always been gladly welcomed. Such minds as his were rare in Curryville. His purity of thought, his Christian charity, his ardent love of justice, and (quite as much as anything) his delight in the free and friendly discussion of principles, whether moral, political, or theological, made him a great favourite with the lonely old man.

Nor to Mr. Villars alone did Penn's visits bring pleasure. They delighted equally young Carl and old Toby. And Virginia? Why, being altogether devoted to her blind parent, for whose happiness she could never do enough, she was, of course, enchanted with the attentions she saw Penn pay *him*. That was all—at least, the dear girl thought that was all.

As for Salina, forsaken spouse of the gay Lysander Sprowl, she too, after sulkily brooding over her misfortunes all day, was glad enough to have any intelligent person come in in the evening and break the monotony of her sad life.

Such were Penn's relations with the family to whom alone he durst apply for refuge in his distress. Others might indeed have ventured to shelter him, but they, like Stackridge, were hated Unionists, and any mercy shown to him would have brought evil upon themselves. Mr. Villars, however, blind and venerated old man, had sufficient influence over the people, Penn believed, to serve as a protection to his household even with him in it.

So hither he came—how unwillingly let the proud and sensitive judge.

Most of all, as I have said, Penn dreaded the pure Virginia's eyes. Mr. Villars could not see him, and for Salina he did not care much—singularly enough, for she alone was of an acrid and sarcastic temper. What he desired was to creep quietly to the kitchen door, call out Carl if he was there, or secretly make known his condition to old Toby, and thus obtain admission to the house, concealment, and assistance, without letting Virginia, or her father even, know of his presence.

How this honest wish was thwarted we have seen. When the door was first opened he had turned to fly. But that was cowardly, so he returned and knocked, and called the negro by name to reassure him. And the door was once more opened, and Virginia saw him—recognised him—knew in an instant what brutal deed had been done, and instinctively covered her eyes to shut out the hideous sight.

But it was no time to indulge in feelings of false modesty if she felt any. It was no time to be weak, or foolish, or frightened, or ashamed.

"It is Penn!" she exclaimed in a burst of indignation and grief.

"Toby! Toby! you great stupid, you! what are you staring for? Take him in! why don't you? O father!" And she threw herself on the old man's bosom and hid her face.

"What has happened to Penn?" asked the old man.

"I have been tarred-and-feathered," answered Penn, entering and closing the door behind him. "And I have been shut out of Mrs. Sprowl's house. This is my excuse for coming here. I must go somewhere, you know!"

"And where but here?" answered the old man. He had suppressed an outburst of feeling, and now stood calm, compassionating, extending his hands—his staff fallen upon the floor. "I feared it might come to this! Terrible times are upon us, and you are only one of the first to suffer. You did well to come to us. Are you hurt?"

"I hardly know," replied Penn. "I beg of you don't be alarmed or troubled. I hope you will excuse me. I know I am a fearful object to look at, and did not intend to be seen."

He stood holding the bed-tick over him, and his clothes before him, to conceal as much as possible his hideous guise, suffering in that moment of pause unutterable things. Was ever hero of romance in such dismal plight? Surely no writer of fiction would venture to show his hero in so ridiculous and damaging an aspect. But this is by no manner of means a romance, and I must relate facts as they occurred.

"Do not be sorry that I have seen you," said Virginia, lifting her face again, flashing with tears. "I see in this shameful disguise only the shame of those who have so cruelly treated you! Toby will help you. And there is Carl at last!"

She retreated from the room by one door just as Carl and Stackridge entered by the other.

Poor Penn! gentle and shrinking Penn! it was painful enough for him to meet even these coarser eyes, friendly though they were. The shock upon his system had been terrible, and now, his strength and resolution giving way, his bewildered senses began to reel, and he swooned in the farmer's arms.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TWO GUESTS.

VIRGINIA entered the sitting-room—the same where so many happy evenings had been enjoyed by the little family, in the society of him who now lay bruised, disfigured, and insensible in Toby's kitchen.

She walked to and fro, she gazed from the windows out into the

darkness, she threw herself on the lounge, scarce able to control the feelings of pity and indignation that agitated her. For almost the first time in her life she was fired with vindictiveness; she burned to see some swift and terrible retribution overtake the perpetrators of this atrocious deed.

Mr. Villars soon came out to her. She hastened to lead him to a seat.

"How is he?—much injured?" she asked.

"He has been brutally used," said the old man. "But he is now in good hands. Where is Salina?"

"I don't know. I had been to look for her when I came and found you in the kitchen. I think she must have gone out."

"Gone out to-night? That is very strange!" the old man mused. "She will have to be told that Penn is in the house. But I think the knowledge of the fact ought to go no farther. Mr. Stackridge is of the same opinion. Now that they have begun to persecute him, they will never cease, so long as he remains alive within their reach."

"And we must conceal him?"

"Yes, until this storm blows over, or he can be safely got out of the state."

"There is Salina now!" exclaimed the girl, hearing footsteps approach the piazza.

"If it is she is not alone," said the old man, whose blindness had rendered his hearing acute. "It is a man's step. Don't be agitated, my child. Much depends on our calmness and self-possession now. If it is a visitor you must admit him and appear as hospitable as usual."

It was a visitor, and he came alone—a young fellow of dashing appearance, handsome black hair and whiskers, and very black eyes.

"Mr. Bythewood, father," said Virginia, showing him immediately into the sitting-room.

"I entreat you, do not rise!" said Mr. Bythewood, with exceeding affability, hastening to prevent that act of politeness on the part of the blind old man.

"Did you not bring my daughter with you?" asked Mr. Villars.

"Your daughter is here, sir;" and he of the handsome whiskers gave Virginia a most captivating bow and smile.

"He means my sister," said Virginia. "She has gone out, and we are feeling somewhat anxious about her." She thought it best to say thus much, in order that, should the visitor perceive any strangeness or abstraction on her part, he might think it was caused by solicitude for the absent Salina.

"Nothing can have happened to her certainly," remarked Mr. Bythewood, seating himself in an attitude of luxurious ease, approaching almost

to indolent recklessness. "We are the most chivalrous people in the world. There is no people, I think, on the face of the globe among whom the innocent and defenceless are so perfectly secure."

Virginia thought of the hapless victim of the mob in the kitchen yonder, and smiled politely.

"I have no very great fears of her safety," said the old man. "Yet I have felt some anxiety to know the meaning of the noises I heard in the direction of the academy an hour ago."

Bythewood laughed and stroked his glossy moustache.

"I don't know, sir. I reckon, however, that the Yankee schoolmaster has been favoured with a little demonstration of Southern sentiment."

"How! not mobbed?"

"Call it what you please, sir," said Bythewood, with an air of pleasantry. "I think our people have been roused at last; and if so, they have probably given him a lesson he will never forget."

"Whom do you mean by 'our people?'" the old man gravely inquired.

"He means," said Virginia, with quiet but cutting irony, "the most chivalrous people in the world! among whom the innocent and defenceless are more secure than anywhere else on the globe!"

"Precisely," said Mr. Bythewood, with a placid smile. "But among whom obnoxious persons, dangerous to our institutions, cannot be tolerated. As for this affair"—carelessly, as if what had happened to Penn was of no particular consequence to anybody present, least of all to him—"I don't know anything about it. Of course, I would never go near a popular demonstration of the kind. I don't say I approve of it, and I don't say I disapprove of it. These are no ordinary times, Mr. Villars. The South is already plunged into a revolution."

"Indeed I fear so!"

"Fear so? I glory that it is so! We are about to build up the most magnificent empire on which the sun has ever shone!"

"Cemented with the blood of our own brethren!" said the old man solemnly.

"There may be a little bloodshed, but not much. The Yankees won't fight. They are not a military people. Their armies will scatter before us like chaff before the wind. I know you don't think as I do. I respect the lingering attachment you feel for the old Union—it is very natural," said Bythewood indulgently.

The old man smiled. His eyes were closed, and his hands were folded before him near his breast, in his favourite attitude. And he answered—

"You are very tolerant towards me, my young friend. It is because you consider me old, and helpless, and perhaps a little childish, no doubt.

But hear my words. You are going to build up a magnificent empire, founded on—slavery. But I tell you, slavery will be crushed to atoms between the upper and nether millstones of the war you are bringing upon the nation."

He spoke with the power of deep and earnest conviction, and the complacent Bythewood was for a moment abashed.

"I was well aware of your opinions," he remarked, rallying presently. "It is useless for us to argue the point. And Virginia, I conceive, does not like politics. Will you favour us with a song, Virginia?"

"With pleasure, if you wish it," said Virginia, with perfect civility, although a close observer might have seen how repulsive to her was the presence of this handsome but selfish and unprincipled man. He was their guest, and she had been bred to habits of generous and self-sacrificing hospitality. However detested a visitor, he must be politely entertained. On this occasion she led the way to the parlour, where the piano was—all the more readily, perhaps, because it was still farther removed from the kitchen. Bythewood followed, supporting, with an ostentatious show of solicitude, the steps of the feeble old man.

Bythewood named the pieces he wished her to sing, and bent graciously over the piano to turn the music-leaves for her, and applauded with enthusiasm. And so she entertained him. And all the while were passing around them scenes very different! There was Penn, heroically stifling the groans of a wounded spirit, within sound of her sweet voice, and Bythewood so utterly ignorant of his presence there! A little farther off, and just outside the house, a young woman was even then parting, with whispers and mystery, from an adventurous rover. Still a little farther, in Barber Jim's back-room, Silas Ropes was treating his accomplices; and while these drank and blasphemed, Stackridge's companions, close by, in the secret cellar, were practising the soldier's drill.

Salina parted from the rover, and came into the house while Virginia was singing, throwing her bonnet negligently back as she sat down.

"Why, Salina! where have you been?" said Virginia, finishing a strain, and turning eagerly on the piano stool. "We have been wondering what had become of you!"

"You need never wonder about me," said Salina coldly. "I must go out and walk, even if I don't have time till after dark."

She drummed upon the carpet with her foot, while her upper lip twitched nervously. It was a rather short lip, and she had an unconscious habit of hitching up one corner of it still more closely, with a spiteful and impatient expression. Aside from this labial peculiarity (and perhaps the disproportionate prominence of a very large white forehead), her features

were pretty enough, although they lacked the charming freshness of her younger sister's.

Virginia knew well that the pretence of not getting time for her walk until after dark was absurd, but, perceiving the unhappy mood she was in, forbore to say so. And she resumed her task of entertaining Bythewood.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROVER.

MEANWHILE the nocturnal acquaintance from whom Salina had parted took a last look at the house, and shook his envious head darkly at the room where the light and the music were; then, thrusting his hands into his pockets, with a swaggering air went plodding on his lonely way across the fields in the starlight. The direction he took was that from which Penn had arrived, and in the course of twenty minutes he approached the door of the solitary house with the dark windows and the dogs within. He walked all around, and seeing no light, nor any indication of life, drew near, and rapped softly on a pane.

The dogs were roused in an instant, and barked furiously. Nothing daunted, he waited for a lull in the storm he had raised, and rapped again.

"Who's there?" creaked the stridulous voice of good Mrs. Sprowl.

"*You know!*" said the rover in a suppressed, confidential tone—"one who has a right."

Now the excellent relict of the late lamented Sprowl reflected naturally that if anybody had a right there it was he who paid her for his board in advance.

"You agin, after all, is it?" she exclaimed angrily. "Couldn't you find nowhere else to go to? But if you imagine I've thought better on't, and will let you in, you're grandly mistaken! Go away this instant, or I'll let the dogs out!"

"Let 'em out, and be ——!"

No matter about the last word of the rover's defiant answer. It was a very irritating word to the temper of the good Mrs. Sprowl. This was the first time (she thought) she had ever heard the mild and benignant schoolmaster swear, but she was not much surprised, believing that it was scarcely in the power of man to endure what he had that night endured and *not* swear.

"Look out for yourself, then, you sir, for I shall take you at your word!"

And there was a sound of slipping bolts, followed by the careful opening of the door.

Out bounced the dogs, and leaped upon the intruder, but, instead of tearing him to pieces, they fell to caressing him in the most vivacious and triumphant manner.

"Down, Brag! off, Grip! curse you!"

And he kicked them till they yelped for their too fond welcome.

"How dare you, sir, use my dogs so!" screamed the lady within, enraged to think they had permitted that miserable schoolmaster to get the better of them.

"I'll kick them and you too for this trick!" muttered the man. "I'll learn ye to shut me out and make a row when I'm coming to see you at the risk of my——"

She cut him short with a cry of amazement.

"Lysander! is it you?"

"Hold your noise!" said Lysander, pressing into the house. "Call my name again, and I'll choke you! Where's your schoolmaster? Won't he hear?"

"Dear me! if it don't beat everything!" said Mrs. Sprowl in palpitating accents. "Don't you know I took you for the master?"

"No, I didn't know it. This looks more like a welcome, though"—Lysander began to be mollified—"there, there! don't smother a fellow! One kiss is as good as fifty! The master is out, then? Anybody in the house?"

"No; I'm so thankful! It seems quite providential! Oh, dearie, dearie, sonny dearie! I'm so glad to see you agin!"

"Come, none of your 'sonny dearies'—it makes me sick! Strike a light, and get me some supper, can't you?"

"Yes, my boy, with all my heart! This is the happiest day I've seen——"

"Ah, what's happened to-day?" said Lysander, treating with levity his mother's blissful confession.

"I mean this night—to have you back again! How could I mistake you for that dreadful schoolmaster!"

Here her trembling fingers struck a match.

"Draw the curtains," said Lysander, hastily executing his own order, as the blue sputter kindled up into a flame that lighted the room; "it ain't quite time for me to be seen here yet."

"Where did you come from? What are you here for? Oh, my dear, dear Lysie!"—she gazed at him affectionately—"you ain't in no great danger, be you?"

"That depends. Soon as Tennessee secedes I shall be safe enough. I'm going to have a commission in the Confederate army, and that'll be protection from anything that might happen on account of old scores. I'm going to raise a company in this very place, and let the law touch me if it can!"

He tossed his cap into a corner, and sprawled upon a chair upon the stove, at which his devoted mother was already blowing her breath away in the endeavour to kindle a blaze. She stopped blowing to gape at his good news, turning up at him her low, skinny forehead, narrow nose, and close-set, winking eyes.

"There, I declare!" said she. "I knowed my boy would come back to me some day a gentleman!"

"A gentleman? I'm bound to be that!" said the man, with a braggart laugh and swagger. "I tell ye, mar, we're going to have the greatest confederacy ever was!"

"Do tell if we be!" said the edified "mar."

"Six months from now, you'll see the Yankees grovelling at our feet, begging for admission along with us. We'll have Washington, and all of the North we want, and defy the world!"

"I want to know now!" said Mrs. Sprowl, overcome with admiration.

"The slave-trade will be re-opened, Yankee ships will bring us cargoes of splendid niggers, not a man in the South but 'll be able to own three or four, they'll be so cheap, and we'll be so rich, you see," said Lysander.

"You don't say, re'lly!"

"That's the programme, mar! You'll see it all with your own eyes in six months."

"Why, then, why *shouldn't* the South secede?" replied "mar," hastening to put on the tea-kettle, and then to mix up a corn dodger for her son's supper. "I'm sure we ought all on us to have our servants, and live without work, and I knowed all the time there was another side to what Penn Hapgood preaches (for he's dead set agin' secession), though I couldn't answer him as *you* could, Lysie dear!"

"Wal, never mind all that, but hurry up the grub!" said "Lysie dear," putting sticks in the stove. "I hain't had a mouthful since breakfast."

"You hain't seen *her*, of course?" observed Mrs. Sprowl mysteriously.

"Her? who?"

"Salina!" in a whisper, as if to be overheard by a mouse in the wall would have been fatal.

"Wal, I have seen *her*, I reckon! Not an hour ago. By appointment. I wrote her I was coming, got a woman to direct the letter, and had a long talk with her to-night. What I want just now is a little money, and she's got to raise it for me, and what she can't raise I shall look to you for."

"O dear me! don't say money to me!" exclaimed the widow, alarmed. "Partic'larly now I've lost my best feather-bed and my boarder!"

"What is it about your boarder? Out with it, and stop this hinting around!"

Thus prompted, Mrs. Sprowl, who had, indeed, been waiting for the opportunity, related all she knew of what had happened to Penn. Lysander kindled up with interest as she proceeded, and finally broke forth with a startling oath.

"And I can tell you where he has gone!" he said. "He's gone to the house I can't get into for love nor money! She refused me admission to-night—refused me money! but he is taken in, and their money will be lavished on him!"

"But how do you know, my son——?"

"How do I know he's there? Because, when I was with her in the orchard, we saw an object—she said it was some old nigger to see Toby—go into the kitchen. Then in a little while a man—it must have been Stackridge, if you say he was looking for him—went in with Carl, and didn't come out again as I could see. I stayed till the light from the kitchen went up into the bedroom, in the corner of the house this way. There's yer boarder, mar, I'll bet my life! But he won't be there long, I can tell ye!" laughed Lysander maliciously.

CHAPTER IX.

TOBY'S PATIENT HAS A CALLER.

MR. BYTHEWOOD had now taken his departure; Salina had been intrusted with the secret; and Penn had been put to bed (as the rover correctly surmised) in the corner bedchamber.

He had been diligently plucked, as much of the tar had been removed as could be easily taken off by methods known to Stackridge and Toby, and his wounds had been dressed. And there he lay, at last, in the soothing linen, exhausted and suffering, yet somehow happy, thinking with gratitude of the friends God had given him in his sore need.

"Bress your heart, dear young massa!" said old Toby, standing by the bed (for he would not sit down), and regarding him with an unlimited variety of winks, and nods, and grins, expressive of satisfaction with his

work; "ye're jest as comf'table now as am possible under de sarcumstances. If dar's anyting in dis yer world ye wants now, say de word, and ol' Toby'll jump at de chance to fetch 'em fur ye."

"There is nothing I want now, good Toby, but that you and Carl should rest. You have done everything you can, and far more than I deserve. I will try to thank you when I am stronger."

"Can't tink ob quittin' ye dis yer night, nohow, massa! Mr. Stackridge he's gone, Carl he can go to bed—he ain't no 'count here, no way But I'se took de job o' gitt'n you well, Mass' Penn, and I'se gwine to put it frew, 'pon honor—do it up han'some!"

And notwithstanding Penn's remonstrances, the faithful black absolutely refused to leave him. Indeed, the most he could be prevailed upon to do for his own comfort was to bring his blanket into the room, and promise that he would lie down upon it when he felt sleepy. Whether he kept his word or not I cannot say, but there was no time during the night when, if Penn happened to stir uneasily, he did not see the earnest, tender, cheerful black face at his pillow in an instant, and hear the affectionate voice softly inquire—

"What can I do fur ye, massa? Ain't dar nuffin ol' Toby can be a doin' fur ye, jes' to pass away de time?"

Sometimes it was water Penn wanted, but it did him more good to witness the delight it gave Toby to wait upon him, than to drink the coolest and most delicious draught fresh from the well.

At length Penn began to feel hot and stifled.

"What have you hung over the window, Toby?"

"Dat ar? 'Pears like dat ar's my blanket, sar. Ye see 'twouldn't do nohow to let nary a chink o' light be seen from tudder side, 'cause dat 'ud make folks s'pec' sumfin', dis yer time o' night. So I jes' sticks up my ol' blanket—'pears like I can sleep a heap better on de bar floor!"

"But I must have some fresh air, you dear old hypocrite!" said Penn, deeply touched, for he knew that the African had deprived himself of his blanket because he did not wish to disturb him by leaving the room for another.

"I'll fix him! I'll fix him!" said Toby. And he seemed raised to the very summit of happiness on discovering that there was something requiring the exercise of his ingenuity still to be done for his patient.

After that Penn slept a little. "Tank de good Lord," said the old negro the next morning, "you're lookin' as chirk as can be! I'se a right smart hand fur to be nussin' ob de sick; and sakes! how I likes it! I'se gwine to hab you well, sar, 'fore eber a soul knows you'se in de house."

Yet Toby's words expressed a great deal more confidence than he felt;

for though he had little apprehension of Penn's retreat being discovered, he saw how weak and feverish he was, and feared the necessity of sending for a doctor.

Penn now insisted strongly that the old servant should not neglect his other duties for him.

"Now you jes' be easy in yer mind on dat pint! Dar's Carl tends to out-door 'rangements, and I'se got him larnt so's't he's bery good, bery good indeed, to look arter my cow, and my pigs, and sech like chores, when I'se got more 'portant tings on hand myself. And dar's Miss Jinny, she's glad enough to git de breakfust herself dis mornin', only jes' I kind o' keeps an eye on her, so she shan't do nuffin wrong. She an' Massa Villars come to 'quire bery partic'lar 'bout you 'fore you was awake, sar."

These simple words seemed to flood Penn's heart with gratitude. Toby withdrew, but presently returned, bringing a salver.

"Nuffin but a little broff, massa. And a toasted cracker."

O, you are too kind, Toby! Really, I can't eat this morning."

"Can't eat, sar? I declar, now!" (in a whisper), "how disapp'inted she'll be!"

"Who will be disappointed?"

"Who? Miss Jinny, to be sure! She made de broff wid her own hands. Under my d'rections, ob course! But she would make 'em herself, and took a heap ob pains to hab 'em good, and put in de salt wid her own purty fingers, and looked as rosy a-stirrin' and toastin' ober de fire as eber you see an angel, sar!"

For some reason Penn began to think better of the broth, and, to Toby's infinite satisfaction, he consented to eat a little. Toby soon had him bolstered up in bed, and held the salver before him, and looked a perfect picture of epicurean enjoyment, just from seeing his patient eat.

"It is delicious!" said Penn, at which brief eulogium the whole rich, exuberant, tropical soul of the unselfish African seemed to expand and blossom forth with joy. "I shall be sure to get well and strong soon under such treatment. You must let Carl go to Mrs. Sprowl's and fetch my clothes: I shall want some of them when I get up."

"Bress you, sar! you forgets nobody ain't to know whar you be! Mass' Villars he say so. You jes' lef' de clo'es alone, yit awhile. Wouldn't hab dat ar Widder Sprowl find out you'se in dis yer house, not if you'd gib me——"

Rap, rap, at the chamber door; two light, hurried knocks.

"Miss Jinny herself!" said old Toby, forgetting Mrs. Sprowl in an instant. And setting down the salver, he ran to the door.

Penn heard quic whispers of consultation; then Toby came back, his

eyes rolling and his ivory shining with a ludicrous expression of wrath and amazement.

"It's de bery ol' hag herself! Speak de debil's name and he's allus at de door!"

"Who? Mrs. Sprowl?"

"Yes, sar, and I wish she was furder, sar! She's a-'quirin' fur you—says she knows you'se in de house, and it's bery 'portant she must see ye. But, tank de Lord, massa!" chuckled the old negro, "Carl's forgot his English, and don't know nuffin what she wants! He! he! he! Or if she makes him und'stan' one ting, den he talks Dutch, and *she* don't und'stan'; and so dey'se habin' it, fust one, den tudder, while Miss Jinny she hears 'em and comes fur to let us know; but how de ol' critter eber found you out, dat am one ob de mysteries!"

"She merely guesses I am here," said Penn. "I'm only afraid Carl will overdo his part, and confirm her suspicions."

"'Sh!" hissed Toby in sudden alarm. "She's a-comin'—she's a-comin' right up to dis yer door!"

And he flew to fasten it. He had scarcely done so when a hand tried the latch, and a voice called—

"Come, ye needn't, none of ye, try to impose on me! I know you're in this very room, Penn Hapgood, and you'll let me in, old friends so, I'm shore! I've bothered long enough with that stupid Dutch boy, and now Virginny wants to keep me, and talk with me, but I've nothing to do with nobody in this house but *you!*"

Mrs. Sprowl had not been on amicable terms with her daughter-in-law's family since Salina and her husband separated, and this last declaration she made loud enough for all in the house to hear.

Penn motioned for Toby to open the door, believing it the better way to admit the lady and conciliate her, but Toby shook his head, and his fist with grim defiance.

"Wal," said Mrs. Sprowl, "you can do as you please about lettin' a body in, but I'll give ye to understand one thing—I don't stir a foot from this door till it's opened, and if you want it kept secret that you're here, it'll be a great deal better for you, Penn Hapgood, to let me in, than to keep me standin' or settin' all day on the stairs."

The idea of a long siege struck Toby with dismay; he hesitated, but Penn spoke—

"I am very weak and very ill, madam, but I have learned what it is to be driven from a door that should be opened to welcome me, and I am not willing, under any circumstances, to treat another as you last night treated me."

This was spoken to the lady's face, for Toby, seeing that concealment was at an end, had slipped the bolt, and she had come in.

"Wal, now, Mr. Hapgood," she began, with a simper which betrayed a little contrition and a good deal of crafty selfishness, "you mustn't go to bein' too hard on me for that. Consider that I'm a poor widder, and my life war threatened, and I *had* to do as I did."

"Well, well," said Penn, "I certainly forgive you. Give her a chair, Toby."

Toby placed the chair, and widow Sprowl sat down.

"I couldn't be easy—old friends so—till I had come over to see how you be," she said, folding her hands, and regarding Penn with a solemn pucker of solicitude. "I know 'twas a dreadful thing, but it's some comfort to think it's nothing I'm any ways to blame fur. It's hard enough for me to lose a boarder jest at this time, say nothing about a friend that's been jest like one of my own family, and that I've cooked, and washed, and ironed fur, as if he war my own son!"

And Mrs. Sprowl wiped her eyes, while she carefully watched the effect of her words.

"And I thought," said she—"old friends so—maybe you wouldn't mind making me a present of the trifle you've paid over and above what's due fur your board, fur I'm a poor widder, as you know, and my only son is a wanderer on the face of the 'arth."

Penn readily consented to make the present, perhaps reflecting that it would be equally impossible for him ever to board it out, or get her to return the money.

"Then there's that old cloak of yourn," said Mrs. Sprowl sympathisingly. "I believe you partly promised it to me, didn't you? I can manage to get me a cape out on't."

"Yes, yes," said Penn, "you can have the cloak;" while Toby glared with rage behind her chair.

"And I considered 'twouldn't be no more'n fair that you should pay for the—— I don't see how in the world I can afford to lose it, bein' a poor widder, and live geeses' feathers at that, and my only son——"

She hid her face in her apron, overcome with emotion.

"What am I to pay for?" asked Penn.

"Fur—fur you know," she said, "I never would have parted with it fur any money, and it will take at least ten dollars to replace it, which is hard, bein' a poor widder, and as strong a linen tick as ever you see, that I made myself, and that my blessed husband died on, and helped me pick the geese with his own hands. and I never thought, when I took you to board,

that even *that* bed would be sacrificed by it, for 'twas on your account, you are 'ware, it was took last night and done for."

"And you think I ought to pay for the bed?" said Penn, as much astonished as if Silas Ropes had sent in his bill—"To 1 coat tar & feathers, 1,000 dollars."

"They said I must look to you," whined the visitor, "and if you don't pay fur't I don't know who will, I'm shore, for none of them have sot at my board, and drinked of my coffee, and e't of my good corn dodgers, and slep' in my best bed, all for four dollars fifty a week, washing and ironing throwed in, and a poor widder at that."

"Mrs. Sprowl," said Penn, laughing, ill as he was, "have the kindness not to tell any one that I am here, and as soon as I am able to do so, I will pay you for your excellent feather-bed."

"Thank you—very good in you I'm shore!" said the worthy creature, brightening. "And if there's anything else among your things you can spare——"

"I'll see! I'll see!" said Penn, wearily. "Leave me now, do!"

"But if you had a few dollars, this morning, towards the bed," she insisted, "for my son"—she almost betrayed herself, being about to say that Lysander had arrived, and must have money; but she coughed, and added, in a changed voice—"is a wanderer on the face of the 'arth."

Penn, however, reflecting that she would have more encouragement to keep his secret if he held the reward in reserve, replied that he could not possibly spare any money before collecting what was due to him from the trustees of the academy. Her countenance fell on hearing this; and reluctantly abandoning the object of her mission, she took her leave, and went home to her hopeful son.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOW'S GREEN CHEST.

MR. VILLARS had spoken truly when he said Penn's persecutors would not rest here. In fact, Mr. Ropes and three of his accomplices were even now on the way to Mrs. Sprowl's abode to make inquiries concerning the schoolmaster.

The lone creature had scarcely reached her own door when she saw them coming. Now, though Penn was not in the house, her son was. Great, therefore, was her trepidation at the sight of visitors, and she evinced such eagerness to assure them that the object of their pursuit was not there, and appeared altogether so frightened and guilty, that Ropes winked knowingly at his companions, and said—

"He's here, boys, safe enough."

So they forced their way into the house, her increased tremor and confusion serving only to confirm them in their suspicions.

"Not that we doubt your word in the least, Mrs. Sprowl"—Ropes smiled sarcastically—"but, of course, you can't object to our searching the premises, for we're in the performance of a solemn duty. Any whisky in the house, widder?"

The obliging lady went to find a bottle. She was gone so long, however, that the visitors became impatient. Ropes accordingly stationed two of his men at the doors, and with the third went in pursuit of Mrs. Sprowl, whom they met coming downstairs.

"Keep your liquor up there, do ye?" said Ropes significantly.

"I—I thought"—Mrs. Sprowl gasped for breath before she could proceed—"the master had some in his room. But I can't find it. You are at liberty to—to look in his room, if you wants to."

"Wal, it's our dooty to, I suppose. Meantime, you can be bringing the whisky. Give some to the boys outside, then bring the bottle up to us. That's the way, Gad," said Silas, as she unwillingly obeyed; "allus be perlite to the sex, ye know."

"Sartin! allus!" said Gad.

"But he ain't here," said Silas, just glancing into Penn's room, "or else she wouldn't have been so willing for us to search. Le's begin at the top of the house, and look along down." They entered a low-roofed, empty garret. "As we can't perceed without the whisky, we'll wait here. Meantime, I'll tell you what you wanted to know."

They sat down on a little old green chest, and Ropes, producing a plug of tobacco, gave his friend a bite, and took a bite himself.

"What I'm going to say is in perfect confidence, between friends," chewing and crossing his legs.

Gad chewed, and crossed his legs, and said, "Oh, of course, in perfect confidence!"

"Wal, then, I'll tell ye where the money fur our job comes from. It comes from Gus Bythewood."

"Sho!" said Gad, looking surprised at Silas.

"Fact!" said Silas, looking wise at Gad.

"But what's he so dead set agin' the master fur?"

"I'll tell ye, Gad." And Mr. Ropes rested a finger confidingly on his friend's knee. "Fur as I kin jedge, Gus has a sneakin' notion arter that youngest Villars gal—Virginny, ye know."

"Don't blame him!" chuckled Gad.

"But ye see, thar's that Hapgood, he's a great favourite with the

Villarses, and Gus nat'rally wants to git him out of the way. It won't do, though, for him to have it known he has anything to do with our operations. He pays us, and backs us up with plenty of cash if we get into trouble; but he keeps dark, you understand."

"The master ought to be hung for his abolitionism!" said Gad, by way of self-excuse for being made a jealous man's tool.

"That ar's jest my sentiment," replied Silas. "But then he's allus been a peaceable sort of chap, and held his tongue; so he might have been let alone some time yet, if it hadn't been for—— What in time!"

Ropes started and changed colour, glancing first at Gad, then down at the chest.

"He's in it!" whispered Gad.

Both jumped up, and, facing about, looked at the green lid and at each other.

The chest was so small it had not occurred to them that a man could get into it. Lysander had got into it, however, and there he lay, so cramped, and stifled, and compressed, that he could not endure the torture without an effort to ease it by moving a little. He had stirred, then all was still again.

"Think he's heerd us?" said Silas.

"Must have heerd something," said Gad.

"Then he's as good as a dead man!"

Silas drew his pistol, resolved to sacrifice the schoolmaster on the altar of secrecy. But as he was about to fire into the chest at a venture (for your cowardly assassin does not like to face his victim), the lid flew open, the chivalry stepped hastily back, and up rose out of the chest—not the schoolmaster, but—Lysander Sprowl.

Silas had struck his head against a rafter, and was quite bewildered for a moment by the shock, the multitude of meteors that rushed across his firmament, and the sudden apparition. Gad, at the same time, stood ready to take a plunge down the stairs in case the schoolmaster should show fight.

"Gentlemen," said the "wanderer on the face of the 'arth," straightening his limbs, and saluting with a reckless air, "I hope I see ye well. Never mind about shooting an old friend, Sile Ropes. I reckon we're about even; and I'll keep your secret if you'll keep mine."

"That's fair," said Ropes, recovering from the falling stars, and putting up his weapon. "Lysander, how are ye? Good joke ain't it?" And they shook hands all around. "But whar's the schoolmaster?" And Silas rubbed his head.

"I know all about the schoolmaster," said Lysander, stepping out of

the chest; "he ain't in this house, but I know just where he is. And I reckon 'twill be for the interest of me and Gus Bythewood if we can have a little talk together, tell him. If he's got money to spare, that'll be to my advantage; and what I know will be to his advantage."

So saying, Lysander closed the chest, and coolly invited the chivalry to resume their seats. They did so, much to the amazement of Mrs. Sprowl, who came upstairs with the whisky, and found the "wanderer on the face of the 'arth" conversing in the most amicable manner with Gad and Silas.

CHAPTER XI.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY.

IF what Silas Ropes had said of his patron, Augustus Bythewood, was true, great must have been the chagrin of that chivalrous young gentleman when an interview was brought about between him and Lysander, and he learned that Penn, instead of being driven from the state, had found refuge in the family of Mr. Villars—that he was there even at the moment when he made his delightful little evening call, and was entertained so charmingly by Virginia.

Bythewood gave Sprowl money, and Sprowl gave Bythewood information and advice. It was in accordance with the programme decided upon by these two worthies that Mr. Ropes at the head of his gang presented himself the next night at Mr. Villars's door.

Virginia, by her father's direction, admitted them. They crowded into the sitting-room, where the old man rose to receive them with his usual urbanity.

"Virginia, have chairs brought for all our friends. I cannot see to recognise them individually, but I salute them all."

"No matter about the cheers," said Silas. "We can do our business standing. Sorry to trouble you with it, sir, but it's jest this. We understand you're harbouring a Yankee abolitionist, and we've called to remind you that sech things can't be allowed in a well-regulated community."

The old man, holding himself still erect with punctilious politeness—for his guests were not seated—and smiling with grand and venerable aspect, made reply in tones full of dignity and sweetness—

"My friends, I am an old man; I am a native of Virginia, and a citizen of Tennessee, and all my life long I have been accustomed to regard the laws of hospitality as sacred."

"My sentiments exactly. I won't hear a word said agin' Southern horsepitality, or Southern perliteness." Mr. Ropes illustrated his remark

by spitting copious tobacco-juice on the floor. "Horsepitality I look upon as one of the stable institootions of our country."

"No doubt it is so," said Mr. Villars, smiling at the unintentional pun.

"That's one thing," added Silas; "but harbouring a abolitionist is another. That's the question we've jest took the liberty to call and have a little quiet talk about to-night."

"Sit down, dear father, do!" entreated Virginia, remaining at his side in spite of her dread and abhorrence of these men. Holding his hand, and regarding him with pale and anxious looks, she endeavoured with gentle force to get him into his chair.

"My father is very feeble," she said, appealing to Silas, "and I beg you will have some consideration for him."

"Sartin, sartin," said Silas. "Keep yer settin', keep yer settin', Mr. Villars."

But the old man still remained upon his feet—his tall spare form, bent with age, his long, thin locks of white hair, and his wan, sightless, calm, and beautiful countenance presenting a wonderful contrast to the blooming figure at his side. It was a picture which might well command the respectful attention of Silas and his compeers.

"My friends," he said, with a grave smile, "we men of the South are rather boastful of our hospitality. But true hospitality consists in something besides eating and drinking with those whose companionship is a sufficient recompense for all that we do for them. It clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, shelters the distressed. With the Arabs, even an enemy is sacred who happens to be a guest. Shall an old Virginian think less of the honour of his house than an Arab?"

Silas looked abashed, silenced for a moment by these noble words and the venerable and majestic mien of the blind old clergyman. It would not do, however, to give up his mission so; and after coughing, turning his quid, and spitting again, he replied—

"That'll do very well to talk, Mr. Villars. But come to the pint. You've got a Yankee abolitionist in your house—that you won't deny."

"I have in my house," said the old man, "a person whose life is in danger from injuries received at your hands last night. He came to us in a condition which, I should have thought, would excite the pity of the hardest heart. Whether or not he is a Yankee abolitionist, I never inquired. It was enough for me that he was a fellow-creature in distress. He is well known in this community, where he has never been guilty of wrong towards any one; and, even if he were a dangerous person, he is not now in a condition to do mischief. Gentlemen, my guest is very ill with a fever."

"Can't help that—you must get rid of him." said Silas. "I'm a-talking

now for your own good as much as anybody's, Mr. Villars. You're a man we all respect; but already you've made yourself a object of suspicion by standing up fur the old rotten Union."

"When I can no longer befriend my guests, or stand up for my country, then I shall have lived long enough!" said the old man with impressive earnestness.

"The old Union," said Gad, coming to the aid of Silas, "is played out. We couldn't have our rights, and so we secede."

"What rights couldn't you have under the government left to us by Washington?"

"That had become corrupted," said Mr. Ropes.

"How corrupted, my friend?"

"By the horrible anti-slavery element!"

"You forget," said Mr. Villars, "that Washington, Jefferson, and, indeed, all the wisest and best men who assisted to frame the government under which we have been so prosperous, were anti-slavery men."

"Wal, I know some on 'em hadn't got enlightened on the subject," Mr. Ropes admitted.

"And do you know that if a stranger, endowed with all the virtues of those patriots, should come among you and preach the political doctrines of Washington and Jefferson, you would serve him as you served Penn Hapgood last night?"

"Shouldn't wonder the least mite if we should!" Silas grinned. "But that's nothing to the purpose. We claim the right to carry our slaves into the territories, and Lincoln's party is pledged to keep 'em out, and that's cause enough for secession."

"How many slaves do you own, Mr. Ropes?" Mr. Villars, still leaning on his daughter's arm, smiled as he put this mild question.

"I—wal—truth is, I don't own nary slave myself—wish I did!" said Silas.

"How many friends have you with you?"

"'Lev'n," said Gad, rapidly counting his companions.

"Well, of the eleven, how many own slaves?"

"I do!" "I do!" spoke up two eager voices.

"How many slaves do you own?"

"I've got as right smart a little nigger boy as there is anywheres in Tennessee!" said the first proudly.

"How old is he?"

"He'll be nine year old next grass, I reckon."

"Well, how many negroes has your friend?"

"I've got one old woman, sir."

"How old is she?"

"Wal, plaguy nigh a hundred—old Bess, you know her."

"Yes, I know old Bess: and an excellent creature she is. So it seems that you eleven men own two slaves. And these you wish to take into some of the territories, I suppose?"

The men looked foolish, and were obliged to own that they had never dreamed of conveying either the nine-year-old lad or the female centenarian out of the state of Tennessee.

"Then what is the grievance you complain of?" asked the old man. They could not name any. "Oh, now, my friends, look you here! I believe in the right of revolution when a government oppresses a people beyond endurance. But in this case it appears, by your own showing, that not one of you has suffered any wrong, and that this is not a revolution in behalf of the poor and oppressed."

His argument was so unanswerable that nothing was left for Silas but to get angry.

"I see you're not only a Unionist, but more'n half a Yankee abolitionist yourself! We didn't come here to listen to any sech incendiary talk. Kick out the schoolmaster, if you wouldn't get into trouble—I warn you! That's the business we've come to see to, and you must tend to't."

"Pity him—spare him!" cried Virginia, shielding her aged father as Ropes approached him. "He cannot turn a sick man out of his house, you know he cannot!"

"You're partic'larly interested in the young man, hey?" said Ropes, grinning insolently.

"I am interested that no harm comes either to my father or to his guests," said the girl. "Go, I implore you! As soon as Mr. Hapgood is able to leave us, he will do so—he will have no wish to stay—this I promise you."

"I'll give him three days to quit the country," said Silas. "Only three days. He'd better be dead than found here at the end of that time. Gentlemen, we've performed this yer painful dooty; now le's adjourn to Barber Jim's and take a drink."

With these words Mr. Ropes retired. While, however, he was treating his men to whisky and cigars with Augustus Bythewood's money, advanced for the purpose, one of the eleven, separating himself from the rest, hurried back to the minister's house.

He crept to the kitchen door, and knocked softly. Carl opened it. There stood the wretched figure, terrified, panting for breath.

"Vat is it?" said Carl.

"I've come fur to tell ye!" said the man, glancing timidly around into

the darkness to see if he was followed. "They mean to kill him! They told you they'd give him three days, but they won't. I heard them saying so among themselves. They may be back this very night, for they'll all git drunk, and nothing will stop 'em then."

Carl stared as these hoarsely-whispered words were poured forth rapidly by the frightened man at the door.

"Come in and shpeak to Mishter Villars."

"No, no! I'll be killed if I am found here!"

But Carl, sturdy and resolute, had no idea of permitting him to deliver so hasty and alarming a message without subjecting him to a cross-examination. He had already got him by the collar, and now he dragged him into the house, the man not daring to resist for fear of outcry and exposure.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Villars.

"A visitor!" said Carl. And he repeated Dan's statement while Dan was recovering his breath.

"Is this true, Mr. Pepperill?" asked the old man, deeply concerned.

"Yes, I be durned if it ain't!" said Dan.

Virginia clung to her father's chair, white with apprehension. Toby was also present, having left his patient an instant to run downstairs and learn what was the cause of this fresh disturbance.

"He's a-lyin' to ye, Mass' Villars—he's a-lyin' to ye! White trash can't tell de troof if dey tries! Don't ye breeve a word he says, massa."

Yet it was evident from the consternation the old negro's face betrayed that *he* believed Dan's story—or at least feared it would prove true if he did not make haste and deny it stoutly; for Toby, like many persons with whiter skins, always felt on such occasions a vague faith that if he could get the bad news sufficiently denounced and discredited in season, all would be well. As if simply setting our minds against the fact would destroy it!

"But they spoke of fittin' yer neck to a noose too!"

"Mine? Ah, if nobody but myself was in danger, I should be well content! What do you think we ought to do, Mr. Pepperill?"

"The master has done me a good turn, and I'll do him one, if I swing fur't!" said Dan, straightening himself with sudden courage. "Get him out 'fore they suspect what you're at, and I'll take him to my house and hide him, I be durned if I won't!"

"It is a kind offer, and I thank you," said the old man. "But how can I resolve to send a guest from my house in this way? Not to save my own life would I do it!"

"But to save his, father!"

"It is only of him I am thinking, my child. Would it be safe to move him, Toby?"

"Safe to move Massa Penn!" ejaculated the old negro, choking with wrath and grief. "Neber tink o' sech a ting, massa! He'd die, shore, widout I should go 'long wid him, and tote him in my ol' arms on a fedder-bed jes' like I would a leetle baby, and den stay and nuss him arter I got him dar. For dem 'ar white trash, what ye s'pose dey knows 'bout takin keer ob a sick gemman like him? It's a bery 'tic'lar case. He's got de delirimum a-comin' on him now, and I can't be away from him a minute. I mus' go back to him dis bery minute!"

And Toby departed, having suddenly conceived an idea of his own for hiding Penn in the barn until the danger was over.

He had been absent from the room but a moment, however, when those remaining in it heard a wild outcry, and presently the old negro reappeared, inspired with superstitious terror, his eyes starting from their sockets, his tongue paralysed.

"What's the matter, Toby?" cried Virginia, perceiving that something really alarming had happened.

The negro tried to speak, but his throat only gurgled incoherently, while the whites of his eyes kept rolling up like saucers.

"Penn—has anything happened to Penn?" said Mr. Villars.

"O, debil, debil, Lord bress us!" gibbered Toby.

"Dead?" cried Virginia.

"Gone! gone, missis!"

Struck with consternation, but refusing to believe the words of the bewildered black, Virginia flew to the sick man's chamber.

Then she understood the full meaning of Toby's words. Penn was not in his bed, nor in the room, nor anywhere in the house. He had disappeared suddenly, strangely, totally.

CHAPTER XII.

CHIVALROUS PROCEEDINGS.

THUS the question of what should be done with his guest, which Mr. Villars knew not how to decide, had been decided for him.

Great was the mystery. There was the bed precisely as Penn had left it a minute since. There was the candle dimly burning. The medicines remained just where Toby had placed them, on the table under the mirror But the patient had vanished.

What had become of him? It was believed that he was too ill to leave

his bed without assistance. And even though he had been strong, it was by no means probable that one so uniformly discreet in his conduct, and ever so regardful of the feelings of others, would have quitted the house in this abrupt and inexplicable manner.

In vain the premises were searched. Not a trace of him could be anywhere discovered. Neither were there any indications of a struggle. Yet it was Toby's firm conviction that the ruffians had entered the house and seized him; that Pepperill was in the plot, the object of whose visit was merely a diversion, while Ropes and the rest accomplished the abduction. This could not, of course, have been done without the aid of magic and the devil; but Toby believed in magic and the devil. The fact that Dan had taken advantage of the confusion to escape, appeared to the Ethiopian mind conclusive.

Nor was the negro alone in his bewilderment. Carl was utterly confounded. The old clergyman, usually so calm, was deeply troubled; while Virginia herself, pierced with the keenest solicitude, could scarce keep her mind free from horrible and superstitious doubts. The doors between the sitting-room and back stairs were all wide open, and it seemed impossible that any one could have come in or gone out that way without being observed. On the other hand, to have reached the front stairs Penn must have passed through Salina's room. But Salina, who was in her room at the time, averred that she had not been disturbed, even by a sound.

"He has got out the vinder," said Carl. But the window was fifteen feet from the ground.

Thus all reasonable conjecture failed, and it seemed necessary to accept Toby's theory of the ruffians, magic, and the devil. Only one thing was certain: Penn was gone. And as if to add to the extreme and painful perplexity of his friends, the clothes which had been stripped from him by the lynchers, which he had brought away in his hands, and which had been hung up in his room by Toby, were left hanging there still, untouched.

The family had not recovered from the dismay his disappearance occasioned when they had cause to rejoice that he was gone. Ropes and his crew returned, as Pepperill had predicted. They were intoxicated and bloodthirsty. They had brought a rope, with which to hang their victim before the old clergyman's door. They were furious on finding he had eluded them, and searched the house with oaths and uproar. Virginia, on her knees, clung to her father, praying that he might not be harmed, and that Penn, whom all had been so anxious just now to find, might be safe from discovery.

Exasperated by their unsuccessful search, the villains hesitated about

laying violent hands on the blind old man, and concluded to wreak their vengeance on Toby. That he was a freed negro was alone a sufficient offence in their eyes to merit a whipping. But he had done more: he had been devoted to the schoolmaster, and they believed he had concealed him. So they seized him, dragged him from the house, bared his back, and tied him to a tree.

As long as the mob had confined itself to searching the premises, Mr. Villars had held his peace. But the moment his faithful old servant was in danger, he roused himself. He rushed to the door, bareheaded, his white hair flowing, his staff in his hand. Both his children accompanied him—Salina, who was really not void of affection, appearing scarcely less anxious and indignant than her sister.

There, in the light of a wood-pile to which fire had been set, stood the old negro, naked to the waist, lashed fast to the trunk, writhing with pain and terror, his brutal tormentors grouped around him in the glare of the flames, preparing, with laughter, oaths, and much loose, leisurely swaggering, to flay his flesh with rods.

"My friends!" cried the old clergyman, with an energy that startled them, "what are you about to do?"

"We're gwine to sarve this nigger," said the man Gad, "jest as every free nigger 'll git sarved that's found in the state three months from now."

"Free niggers is a nuisance," added Ropes, now very drunk, and very much inclined to make a speech on a barrel which his friends rolled out for him. "A nuisance!" he repeated, with a hiccough, steadying himself on his rostrum by holding a branch of the tree. "And let me say to you, feller-patriots, that one of the glorious fruits of secession is, that every free nigger in the state will either be sold for a slave, or druv out, or hung up. I tell you, gentlemen, we're a-goin' to have our own way in these matters, spite of all the ministers in creation!"

The men cheered, and one of them struck Toby a couple of preliminary blows, just to try his hand, and to add the poor old negro's howls to the chorus.

"No doubt"—the old clergyman's voice rose above the tumult—"you will have your way for a season. You will commit injustice with a high hand. You will glut your cruelty upon the defenceless and oppressed. But, as there is a God in heaven"—he lifted up his blind white face, and with his trembling hands shook his staff on high, like a prophet foretelling woe—"as there is a God of justice and mercy who beholds this wickedness, just so sure the hour of your retribution will come! Unbind that man! leave my house in peace! go home, and learn to practise a little of the mercy of which you will yourselves soon stand in need." His venerable

aspect, and the power and authority of his words, awed even that drunken crew. But Silas, vain of his oratorical powers, was enraged that anybody should dispute his influence with the crowd. Holding the branch with one hand, and gesticulating violently with the other, he exclaimed—

"Who is boss here? Who ye goin' to mind? that old traitor, or me? I say, lick the nigger! We're a-goin' to have our way now, and we're a-goin' to have our way to the end of the 'arth, sure as I am a gentleman standing on this yer barrel!"

To emphasise his declaration, he stamped with his foot; the head of the cask flew in, and down went orator, cask, and all, in a fashion rendered all the more ridiculous by the climax of oratory it illustrated.

"Just so sure will your hollow and inhuman schemes fail from under your feet!" exclaimed Mr. Villars, as soon as he learned what had happened. "So surely and so suddenly will you fall."

This incident occurred as Toby's flogging was about to begin in earnest. Virginia had instinctively covered her eyes to shut out the terrible sight, her ears to shut out the sounds, of the beating and the poor old fellow's groans. Luckily, Silas had fallen partly in the barrel, and partly across the sharp edge of it, and being too tipsy to help himself, had been seriously hurt, and was now helpless. The ruffians hastened to extricate him and raise him up. Carl, who, with an open knife concealed in his sleeve, had been waiting for an opportunity, darted at the tree, cut the negro's bonds in a twinkling, and set him free.

Both took to their heels without an instant's delay. But the trick was discovered. They were pursued immediately. Carl was lively on his legs, as we know; but poor old Toby, never a good runner, and now stiff and decrepit with age, was no match even for the slowest of their pursuers.

They ran straight into the orchard, hoping to lose themselves among the shadows. The glare of the burning wood-pile flickered but faintly and unsteadily among the trees. Carl might easily have escaped, but he thought only of Toby, and kept faithfully at his side, assisting him, urging him. A fence was near—if they could only reach that! But Toby was wheezing terribly, and the hand of the foremost ruffian was already extended to seize him.

"Jump the vence over!" was Carl's parting injunction to the old negro, who made a last desperate effort to accomplish the feat; while Carl, turning sharp about, tripped the foot of him of the extended hand, and sent him headlong. The second pursuer he grappled, and both rolled upon the ground together.

Favoured by this diversion, Toby reached the fence, climbed it, and

without looking how, he leaped, jumped down upon—a human figure, stretched there upon the ground!

Notwithstanding his own danger, Toby thought of his patient, and stopped.

"Is it you, massa?"

The man rose slowly to his feet. It was not Penn; it was, on the contrary, the worst of Penn's enemies, who had stationed himself here, in order to observe, unseen, and from a safe distance, the operations of Silas Ropes and his band of patriots.

"O Massa Bythewood!" ejaculated Toby, inspired with sudden joy and hope, "help a poor old niggah! Help! De Villarses will remember it ob ye de longest day you live if you on'y will."

"Why, what's the matter, Toby?" said Augustus, full of rage at having been thus discovered, yet assuming a gracious and patronising manner.

Toby did not make a very coherent reply, but probably the young gentleman was already sufficiently aware of what was going on.

Augustus met and rebuked his pursuers, released Carl, who was suffering at the hands of his antagonist, and led the way back to the house. There he expressed to Mr. Villars and his daughters the utmost regret and indignation for what had occurred, and took Mr. Ropes aside to remonstrate with him for such violent proceedings.

"How fortunate," said Augustus, conducting the old man, with an excessive show of deference and politeness, back into the sitting-room—"how extremely fortunate that I happened to be walking this way! I trust no serious harm has been done, my dear Virginia?"

Bythewood no doubt thought himself entitled to use this affectionate term after the service he had rendered the family.

After he was gone, Toby, having recovered from his fright and the fatigue of running, and got his clothes on again, rushed into the presence of his master and the young ladies.

"I've seed Mass' Penn!" he said. "Arter Bythewood done got up from under de fence whar I jumped on him, I seed anoder man a-crawlin' away on his hands and knees jest a little ways off. 'Twas Mass' Penn! I know 'twas Mass' Penn."

But Toby was mistaken. The second figure he had seen was Mr. Lysander Sprowl, now the confidential adviser and secret companion of Augustus.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OLD CLERGYMAN'S NIGHTGOWN HAS AN ADVENTURE.

WHERE, then, all this time was Penn?

He was himself almost as profoundly ignorant on that subject as anybody. For two or three hours he had been lost to himself no less than to his friends.

When he recovered his consciousness he found that he was lying on the ground, in the open air, in what seemed a barren field, covered with rocks and stunted shrubs.

How he came there he did not know. He had nothing on him but his nightdress—a loan from the old clergyman, besides a blanket wrapped about him. His feet were bare, and he now perceived that they were painfully aching.

Almost too weak to lift a hand to his head, he yet tried to sit up and look around him. All was darkness: not a sign of human habitation, not a twinkling light was visible. The cold night wind swept over him, sighing drearily among the leafless bushes. Chilled, shivering, his temples throbbing, his brain sick and giddy, he sat down again upon the rocks, so ill and suffering that he could scarcely feel astonishment at his situation, or care whether he lived or died.

Where had he been during those hours of oblivion? He seemed to have slept, and to have had terrible dreams. Could he have remembered these dreams, it seemed to him that the whole mystery of his removal to this desolate spot would be explained. And he knew that it required but an effort of his will to remember them. But his soul was too weak: he could not make the effort.

To get upon his feet and walk was impossible. What, then, was left him but to perish here, alone, uncared for, unconsoled by a word of love from any human being? Death he would have welcomed as a relief from his sufferings. Yet when he thought of his home far away, in the peaceful community of Friends, of his parents and sisters now anxiously expecting his return, and again when he remembered the hospitable roof under which he lay, so tenderly nursed, but a little while ago, and thought of the blind old clergyman, of Virginia fresh as a rose, of kind-hearted Carl, and the affectionate old negro, he was stung with the desire to live, and he called feebly—

"Toby! Toby!"

Was his cry heard? Surely there were footsteps on the rocks! And was not that a human form moving dimly between him and the sky? It

passed on, and was lost in the shadows of the pines. Was it some animal, or only a phantom of his feverish brain?

"Toby!" he called again, exerting all his force. But only the wailing wind answered him, and, overcome by the effort, he sank into a swoon. In that swoon it seemed to him that Toby had heard his voice, and that he came to him. Hands, gentle human hands, raised him, felt the blanket, felt his bare feet, and his head, pillowed on stones. Then there seemed to be two Tobys, one good and the other evil, holding a strange consultation over him, which he heard as in a dream.

"We can't leave him dying here!" said the good Toby.

"What dat to me if him die, or whar him die?" said the other Toby. "Straight har!" He seemed to be feeling Penn's locks, in order to ascertain to which race he belonged. "Dat's nuff fur me! Lef him be, I tell ye, and come 'long!"

"Straight hair or curly, it's all the same," said Toby the Good. "Take hold here; we must save him!"

"Hyah-yah! ye don't cotch dis niggah!" chuckled Toby the Bad maliciously. "Nuff more ob his kind, for sartin! Reckon we kin spar' much as one! Hyah-yah!"

Something like a quarrel ensued, the result of which was that Toby the Good finally prevailed upon Toby the Malevolent to assist him. Then Penn was dreamily aware of being lifted in the strong arms of this double individual, and borne away, over rocks, and among thickets, along the mountain side; until even this misty ray of consciousness deserted him, and he fell into a stupor like death.

And what was this he saw on awaking after days and nights of anguish?

Strange things indeed appeared to him. He was in an apartment of prodigious and uncouth architecture, dimly lighted from one side by some opening invisible to him, and by a blazing fire in a little fireplace built on the broad stone floor. The fireplace was without chimney, but a steady draught of air, from the side where the opening seemed to be, swept the smoke away into sombre recesses, where it mingled with the shadows of the place, and was lost in gloom which even the glare of the flames failed to illumine.

Such a cavernous room Penn seemed to have seen in his dreams. The same irregular rocky roof started up from the wall by his bed, and stretched away into vague and obscure distance. All was familiar to him, but all was somehow mixed up with frightful fantasies which had vanished with the fever that had so recently left him.

Here he lay, on a rude bed constructed of four logs, forming the ends and sides, with canvas stretched across them and secured with nails.

Under him was a mattress of moss, over him a blanket like that which he remembered to have had wrapped about him last night in the field.

Last night! Poor Penn was deeply perplexed when he endeavoured to remember whether his mysterious awaking in the open air occurred last night, or many nights ago. He moved his head feebly to look for Toby. Which Toby? for all through his sufferings the same two Tobys, the one good and the other evil, who had taken him from the field, had appeared still to attend him, and he now more than half expected to see the faithful old negro duplicated, and waiting upon him with two bodies and four hands.

But neither the better nor even the worse half of that double being was near him now. Penn was alone in that subterranean solitude. There burned the fire, the shadows flickered, the smoke floated away into the depths of the cavern, in such loneliness and silence as he had never experienced before.

On one side was what appeared to be an artificial chamber built of stones, its door open towards the fire. Ranged about the cave in something like regular order were several massy blocks of different sizes, like the stools of a family of giants. But where were the giants?

Ah, here came Toby at last, or, at any rate, the twin of him. He approached from the side where the daylight shone, bearing an armful of sticks, and whistling a low tune. With his broad back turned towards Penn, he crouched before the fire, which he poked and scolded with malicious energy, his grotesque and gigantic shadow projected on the wall of the cave.

"Burn, ye debil! K-r-r-r! sputter! snap! git mad, why don't ye?"

Then throwing himself back upon a heap of skins, with his heels at the fire, and his long arms swinging over his head, in a savage and picturesque attitude, he burst into a shout, like the cry of a wild beast. This he repeated several times, appearing to take a delight in hearing the echoes resound through the cavern. Then he began to sing, keeping time with his feet, and pausing after each strain of his wild melody to hear it die away in the hollow depths of the cave.

"De glory ob de Lord, it am comin', it am comin',
De glory ob de Lord, let it come!
De glory ob de Lord, hear his trumpet, hear his trumpet,
De angel ob de Lord, he ar come!"

At the last words, "*He ar come!*" a shadow darkened the entrance, and Penn looked, almost expecting to see a literal fulfilment of the prophecy. A form of imposing stature appeared. It was that of a negro upwards of six feet in height, magnificently proportioned, straight as a pillar, and

black as ebony. He wore a dress of skins, carried a gun in his hand, and had an opossum slung over his shoulder.

"Hush your noise!" he said to the singer, in a tone of authority. "Haven't I told you not to *wake him?*"

"No fear o' dat!" chuckled the other. "Him's past dat! Ki! how fat he ar!" seizing the opossum, and beginning to dress him on the spot.

"Past waking! I tell you he's asleep, and everything depends on his waking up right. But you set up a howl that would disturb the dead!"

"Howl! dat's what ye call singin'; me singin', Pomp."

"Well, keep your singing to yourself till he is able to stand it, you unfeeling, ungrateful fellow!"

"What dat ye call dis nigger?" cried the singer, jumping up in a passion, with his blood-stained knife in his hand. "Ongrateful! Say dat ar agin, will ye?"

"Yes, Cudjo, as often as you please," said Pomp, calmly placing his gun in the artificial chamber. "You are an unfeeling, ungrateful fellow."

He turned, and stood regarding him with a proud, lofty, compassionating smile. Cudjo's anger cooled at once.

"You know," said Pomp, "you would have left this man to die there on the rocks if it hadn't been for me."

"Gorry! why not?" said Cudjo. "What's use ob all dis trouble on his 'count?"

"He has had trouble enough on our account," said Pomp.

"On our 'count? Hiyah-yah!" laughed Cudjo, getting down on his knees over the opossum; "how ye make dat out, hy?"

"Pay attention, Cudjo, while I tell ye," said Pomp, stooping, and laying his finger on the deformed shoulder. Cudjo looked up, with his hands and knife still in the opossum's flesh. "This is the way of it, as I heard last night from Pepperill himself, who got into trouble, as you know, by befriending old Pete after his licking. And you know, don't you, how Pete came by his licking?"

"Bein' out nights, totin' our meal and taters to de mountains—dough I reckon de patrol didn't know nuffin' 'bout dat ar, or him wouldn't got off so easy!" said Cudjo.

"Well, it was by befriending Pepperill, who had befriended Pete, who brings us meal and potatoes, that this man got the ill-will of those villains. Do you understand?"

"Say 'em over agin, Pomp. How now? Lef me see! Dat ar's old Pete," sticking up a finger to represent him. "Dat ar's Pepperil," sticking

up a thumb. "Now, yonder is dis yer man, and here am we. Now, how is it, Pomp?"

Pomp repeated his statement, and Cudjo, pointing to his long black finger when Pete was alluded to, and tapping his thumb when Pepperill was mentioned, succeeded in understanding that it was indirectly in consequence of kindness shown to himself that Penn had come to grief.

"Dat so, Pomp?" he said seriously, in a changed voice. "Den 'pears like dar's two white men me don't wish dead as dis yer possom! Pepperill's one and him's tudder."

Pomp, having made this explanation, walked softly to the bedside. He had not before perceived that Penn, lying so still there, was awake. His features lighted up with intelligence and sympathy on making the discovery, and finding him free from feverish symptoms.

"Well, how are you getting on, sir?" he said, feeling Penn's pulse, and seating himself on one of the giant's stools near the bedstead.

"Where am I?" was Penn's first anxious question.

"I fancy you don't know very well where you are, sir," said the negro, with a smile, "and you don't know me either, do you?"

"I think—you are my preserver—are you not?"

"Dat's so! dat ar am a fac'!" cried Cudjo, approaching and wrapping the warm opossum skin about his naked arm as he spoke. "Gorry! me sech a brute me war for leavin' ye dar in de lot. But Pomp, him wouldn't, so we toted you hyar, and him's doctored you right smart eber sence. He ar a great doctor, Pomp ar! Yah!" And Cudjo laughed, showing two tremendous rows of ivory glittering from ear to ear; capering, swinging the opossum skin over his head, and, on the whole, looking far more like a demon of the cave than a human being.

Many questions concerning himself and his friends came crowding to Penn's lips; but the negro, with firm and gentle authority, silenced him.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MAN'S STORY.

THREE days longer Penn lay there on his rude bed in the cave, helpless still, and still in ignorance.

Pomp repeatedly assured him that all was well, and that he had no cause for anxiety, but refused to enlighten him. The negro's demeanour was well calculated to inspire calmness and trust. His strength was enormous. He lifted Penn in his arms as if he had been an infant.

Cudjo was rather like an ape. His gibberings, his grimaces, his antics,

his delight in mischief, excited in the mind of the convalescent almost as much surprise as the other's different deportment.

Meanwhile Penn gradually regained his strength, so that on the fourth day Pomp permitted him to talk a little.

"Tell me first about my friends," said Penn. 'Are they well? Do they know where I am?"

"I hope not, sir," said the negro, with a significant smile, seating himself on the giant's stool. "I trust that no one knows where you are."

"What, then, must they think?" said Penn. "How did I leave them?"

"That is what they are very much perplexed to find out, sir."

"You have heard from them, then?"

"Oh, yes; we have a way of getting news of people down there. Toby has nearly gone distracted on your account. He is positive that you are dead, for he believes you could never have got well out of his hands."

"And Miss—Mr. Villars——?"

"They have been so much disturbed about you, that I would have been glad to inform them of your safety if I could. But not even they must know of this place."

"Where am I, then?"

"You are, as you perceive, in a cave. But I suppose you know so little how you came here that you would find some difficulty in tracing your way to us again?"

This was spoken interrogatively, with an intelligent smile.

"I am so ignorant of the place," said Penn, "that it may be in the planet Mars for aught I know."

"That is well! Now, sir," continued the negro, "since you have several times expressed your obligations to us for preserving your life, I wish to ask one favour in return. It is this. You are welcome to stay here as long as you find your stay beneficial; but when you conclude to go, we desire the privilege of conducting you away. That is not an unreasonable request?"

"Far from it. I understand you," said Penn, whose suspicion was thus confirmed that these men were fugitives. "And I am deeply interested in you. How long have you lived here?"

"You would like to hear something of my story? Well, I was so fortunate as to be brought up by a young master who was only too kind and indulgent to me, considering my station. We were playmates when children, and we were scarcely less intimate when we had both grown up to be men. He went to Paris to study medicine, and took me with him. I passed for his body servant, but I was rather his friend. He never took any important step in life without consulting me; and I am happy to know,"

added Pomp, with grand simplicity, "that my counsel was always good. He acknowledged as much on his death-bed. 'If I had taken your advice oftener,' said he, 'it would have been better for me. I always meant to reward you. You are to have your freedom—your freedom, my dear boy!'"

The negro knitted his brows, his breath came thick, and there was a strange moisture in his eye.

"I loved my master," he continued with simple pathos, "and when I saw him troubled on my account, when he ought to have been thinking of his own soul, I begged him not to let a thought of me give him any uneasiness. My free papers had not been made out, and he was for sending at once for a notary. But his younger brother was with him—he who was to be his heir. 'Don't vex yourself about Pomp, Edwin,' said he. 'I will see that justice is done him.'

"'Ah, thank you, brother!' said Edwin. 'You will set him free, and give him a few hundred dollars to begin life with. Promise that, and I shall rest in peace.' For you must know Edwin had neither wife nor child, and I was the only person dependent on his bounty. He was not rich; he had spent a good part of his fortune abroad, and had but recently established himself in a successful practice in Montgomery. Yet he left enough so that his brother could have well afforded to give me my freedom and a thousand dollars."

"And did he not promise to do so?"

"He promised readily enough. And so my master died and was buried, and I—had another master. For a few days nothing was said about free papers, and I had been too much absorbed in grief for the only man I loved to think much about them. But when the estate was settled up, and my new master was preparing to return to his home here in Tennessee, I grew uneasy.

"'Master,' said I, taking off my hat to him one morning, 'there is nothing more I can do for him who is gone, so I am thinking I would like to be for myself now, if you please.'

"'For yourself, you black rascal!' said my new master, laughing in my face.

"I wasn't used to being spoken to in that way, and it cut. But I kept down that which swelled up in here"—Pomp laid his hand on his heart—"and reminded him, respectfully as I could, of the doctor's last words about me, and of his promise.

"'You fool!' said he, 'do you think I was in earnest?'

"'If you was not,' said I, 'the doctor was.'

"'And do you think,' said he, 'that I am to be bound by the last words of a man too far gone to know his own mind in the matter?'

"'He always meant I should have my freedom,' I answered him, 'and always said so.'

"'Then why didn't he give it to you before, instead of requiring me to make such a sacrifice? Come, come, Pomp!' he patted my shoulder; 'you are altogether too valuable a nigger to throw away. Why, people say you know almost as much about medicine as my brother did. You'll be an invaluable fellow to have on a plantation; you can doctor the field hands, and, maybe, if you behave yourself, get a chance to prescribe for the family. Come, my boy, you mustn't get foolish ideas of freedom into your head; they're what spoil a nigger, and they'll have to be whipped out of you, which would be too bad for a fine handsome darkey like you.'

"He patted my shoulder again, and looked as pleasant and flattering as if I had been a child to be coaxed—I, as much a man, every bit, as he!" said Pomp, with a gleam of pride. "I could have torn him like a tiger for his insolence, his heartless injustice. But I repressed myself; I knew nothing was to be gained by violence.

"'Master,' said I, 'what you say is no doubt very flattering. But I want what my master gave me—what you promised that I should have—I shall be contented with nothing else.'

"'What! you persist?' he said, kindling up. 'Let me tell you now, Pomp, once for all, you'll have to be contented with a good deal less; and never mention the word "freedom" to me again if you would keep that precious hide of yours whole!'

"I saw he meant it, and that there was no help for me. Despair and fury were in me. Then, for the only time in my life, I felt what it was to wish to murder a man. I could have smitten the life out of that smiling, handsome face of his! Thank God I was kept from that. Better thoughts came to me, and I said, 'If he uses me well, I will serve him; if not, I will run for my life.'

"Well, he brought me here to Tennessee. Here he was managing his aunt's estate, which she, soon dying, bequeathed to him. Up to this time I had got on very well; but he never liked me; he often said I knew too much, and was too proud. He was determined to humiliate me; so one day he said to me, 'Pomp, that Nance has been acting ugly of late, and you permit her.' I was a sort of overseer, you see. 'Now I'll tell you what I am going to have done. Nance is going to be whipped, and you are the fellow that's going to whip her.'

"'Pardon, master,' said I, 'that's what I never did—whip a woman.'

"'Then it's time for you to begin. I've had enough of your fine manners, Pomp, and now you have got to come down a little.'

"'I will do anything you please to serve your interests, sir,' said I, 'but whip a woman I never can, and never will. That's so, master.'

"'You villain!' he shouted, seizing a riding-whip, 'I'll teach you to defy my authority to my face!' And he sprang at me, furious with rage.

"'Take care, sir!' I said, stepping back. 'Twill be better for both of us for you not to strike me!'

"'What! you threaten, you villain?'

"'I do not threaten, sir; but I say what I say. It will be better for both of us. You will never strike me twice. I tell you that.'

"I reckon he saw something dangerous in me as I said this, for, instead of striking, he immediately called for help. 'Sam! Harry! Nap! bind this devil! Be quick!'

"'They won't do it!' said I. 'Woe to the man that lays a finger on me, be he master or be he slave!'

"'I'll see about that!' said he, running into the house. He came out again in a minute with a rifle. I was standing there still, the boys all keeping a safe distance, not one daring to touch me.

"'Master,' said I, 'hear one word. I am perfectly willing to die. Long enough have you robbed me of my liberty, and now you are welcome to what is less precious—my poor life. But for your own sake, for your dead brother's sake, let me warn you to beware what you do.'

"I suppose the allusion to his injustice towards me maddened him. He levelled his piece, and pulled the trigger. Luckily the percussion was damp—or else I should not be talking with you now. His aim was straight at my head. I did not give him time for a second attempt. I was on him in an instant. I beat him down, I trampled him with rage. I snatched his gun from him, and lifted it to smash his skull. Just then a voice cried, 'Don't, Pomp! don't kill master!'

"It was Nance, pleading for the man who would have had her whipped. I couldn't stand that. Her mercy made me merciful. 'Good-bye, boys!' I said. They were all standing around, motionless with terror. 'Good-bye, Nance! I am off; live or die, I quit this man's service for ever!'

"So I left him," said Pomp, "and ran for the woods. I was soon ranging these mountains, free, a wild man whom not even their blood-hounds could catch. I took the gun with me—a good one: here it is." He removed the rifle from its crevice in the rocks. "Do you know that name? It is that of its former owner—the man who called himself my master. Do you think it was taking too much from one who would have robbed me of my soul?"

He held the stock over the bed, so that Penn could make out the lettering. Delicately engraved on a surface of inlaid silver was the well-known name—

"*Augustus Bythewood.*"

CHAPTER XV.

AN ANTI-SLAVERY DOCUMENT ON BLACK PARCHMENT.

PENN was not surprised at this discovery. He had already recognised in Pomp the hero of a story which he had heard before.

"But all this happened before I came to Tennessee, did it not? Have you lived in this cave ever since?"

"It is three years since I took to the mountains; but I have spent but a little of that time here. Sometimes, for weeks together, I am away, tramping the hills, exploring the forests, sleeping on the ground in the open air, living on fish, game, and fruits. That is in the summer-time; winters I burrow here."

"If you are so independent in your movements, why have you never escaped to the North?"

"Would I be any better off there? Does not the colour of a negro's skin, even in your free states, render him an object of suspicion and hatred? What chance is there for a man like me? It is a savage, lonely, but not unhappy life I lead—far better for a man like me than servitude here or degradation at the North. I have one faithful human friend at least. Cudjo, cunning and capricious as he seems, is capable of genuine devotion."

"Have you two been together long?"

"One day, a few weeks after I took to the mountains, I was watching for an animal which I heard rustling the foliage of a tree that grows up out of a chasm. I held my gun ready to fire, when I perceived that my animal was something human. It climbed the tree, ran out on one of the branches, leaped like a squirrel to some bushes that grew in the wall of the chasm, and soon pulled itself up to the top. Then I saw that it was a man, and a black man. He came towards the spot where I was concealed, sauntering along, chewing now and then a leaf, and muttering to himself, appearing as happy as a savage in his native woods, and perfectly unconscious of all around him. I rose quickly, and levelled my gun. He uttered a yell of terror, and ran as though to throw himself again into the chasm, but with a threat I prevented him, and he threw himself at my feet, begging me to grant him his life, and not to take him back to his master.

"'Who is your master?' said I.

"'Job Coombs was my master,' said he, 'but I left him.'

"'You are Cudjo, then!' said I, for I had heard of him. He ran away from a tolerably good master on account of unmercifully cruel treatment from the overseer, but as he had been frightfully cut up the night before he disappeared, it was generally believed he had crawled into a hole in the rocks somewhere, and died, and been eaten by buzzards; but it seems that he had been concealed and cured by an old slave on the plantation named Pete."

"Coombs's Pete!" exclaimed Penn.

"You have good cause to remember the name," said Pomp. "As soon as Cudjo was well enough to tramp, he took to the mountains. It was a couple of years afterwards that I met him. We soon came to an understanding, and he conducted me to his cave. Here he lived. He has always kept up a communication with some of his friends, especially with old Pete, who often brings us provisions to a certain place, and supplies us with ammunition. We give him game and skins, which he disposes of when he can, generally to such men as Pepperill. He was going to Pepperill's house, after meeting Cudjo, that night when the patrolmen discovered and whipped him. That led to Pepperill's punishment, and that led to your being here."

"Does old Pete visit you since?"

"No, but he has sent us a message, and I have seen Pepperill."

"Not here!"

"Nobody ever comes here, sir. We have a place where we meet our friends, and as for Pepperill, I went to his house."

"That was bold in you."

"Bold?" The negro smiled. "What will you say, then, when I tell you I have been in Bythewood's house since I left him? I wanted my medicine-case, and the bullet-moulds that belong to the rifle. I entered his room, where he was asleep. I stood for a long time and looked at him by the moonlight. It was well for him he didn't wake," said Pomp, with a dancing light in his eye. "He did not—he slept well. Having got what I wanted, I came away, but I had changed knives with him, and left mine sticking in the bedstead over his head, so that he might know I had been there, and not accuse any one else of the theft."

"The sight of that knife must have given him a shudder when he woke and saw who had been there, and remembered his wrongs towards you!" said Penn.

"Well it might!" said Pomp. "Come here, Cudjo."

Cudjo had just entered the cave, bringing some partridges which he had caught in traps.

"It's allus 'Cudjo!—Cudjo do dis! Cudjo do dat!' What ye want o Cudjo?"

Pomp paid no heed to the ill-natured response, but said to Penn—

"I have told you my reasons for escaping out of slavery; now I will show you Cudjo's."

The back of the deformed was stripped bare. Penn uttered a groan of horror at the sight.

"Dem's what ye call lickins!" said Cudjo, with a hideous grin over his shoulder. "Dat ar am de oberseer's work."

"Good Heaven!" said Penn, sick at the sight of the scars. "I can't endure it! Take him away!"

"Don't be 'fraid!" said Cudjo. "Feel of 'em, sar!" And, taking Penn's hand, he seemed to experience a vindictive joy in passing it over his lash-furrowed flesh. "Not much skin dar, hey? Rough streaks along dar, hey? Needn't pull your hand away dat fashion, and shet yer eyes, and look so white! It's all ober now. What if you'd seen dat back when 'twas fust cut up—or de mornin' arter? Shouldn't blame ye if 't had made ye sick den!"

"But what had you done to merit such cruelty?" exclaimed Penn, relieved when the back was covered.

"What me done? De oberseer didn't hap'm to like me—dat's what me done. But he did hap'm to like my girl—dat's more what me done! So he cut me up wid his own hand—said me sassy, and wouldn't work. Coombs, him's a good man 'nuff; never found no fault 'long wid him, but debil take dat ar Silas Ropes!"

"Silas Ropes!"

"Him was Coombs's oberseer dem times," said Cudjo. "Him gi' me de lickins; him got my gal—me owe him for dat!" And, with a ferocious grimace, clinching his hands together as if he felt his enemy's throat, he gave a yell of rage which resounded through the cavern.

"Go about your work, Cudjo," said Pomp. "What do you think of that back, sir?"

"It is the most powerful anti-slavery document I ever saw!" said Penn.

"He is a native African," said Pomp. "He was brought to this country a young barbarian, and he has barely got civilised—hardly got Christianised yet! I will make him tell you more of his history some day. Now you must have something to eat."

The manner of cooking practised in the cave was primitive. The partridges broiled over the fire, the potatoes roasted in the ashes, and the corn-cake baked in a kettle, the meal was prepared. The artificial

chamber was Cudjo's pantry. One of the giant's stools, having a broad, flat surface, served as a table. On this were placed two or three pewter plates, and as many odd cups and saucers. Cudjo had an old coffee-pot, in which he made strong black coffee. But there was neither sugar nor milk.

Penn's wants were first attended to. He picked the bones of a partridge lying in bed, and thought he had never tasted sweeter meat.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE CAVE AND ON THE MOUNTAIN.

THAT afternoon, as Penn was alone, the mystery of his removal from Mr. Villars's house was suddenly revealed to him.

"I remember it very distinctly now," he said to Pomp, who presently came in and sat by his bed. "Ropes and his crew had been to the house for me. Sick and delirious as I was, I knew the danger to my friends, and it seemed to me that I *must* leave the house. So I watched my opportunity, and when Toby left me for a minute, I darted through his room over the kitchen, climbed down from the window to the roof of the shed, and from there descended by an apple-tree to the ground. This is the dream I have been trying to recall. It is all clear to me now. But I do not remember anything more. The delirium must have given me preternatural strength, if I walked all the distance to the spot where you found me."

"That you did walk it your bruised and bleeding feet were a sufficient evidence," said the negro. "You had just such delirious attacks afterwards, when it was as much as Cudjo and I could do to hold you."

"And the blanket—it is Toby's blanket, which I caught up as I fled," added Penn.

He now became extremely anxious to communicate with his friends, to explain his conduct to them, and let them know of his safety. Besides, he was now getting sufficiently strong to sit up a little, and other clothing was necessary than the old minister's nightgown and Toby's blanket.

"I have been thinking it all over," said Pomp, "and have concluded to pay your friends a visit."

"No, no!" exclaimed Penn with gratitude. "I can't let you incur any such danger on my account. I can never repay you for half you have done for me already!"

"The risk will not be great," said Pomp. "I will take Cudjo with me, and between us we will manage to bring off your clothes."

At night the two blacks departed, leaving Penn alone in the fire-lit cave, waiting for their return, picturing to himself all the difficulties of

their adventure, and thinking with warm gratitude and admiration of Pomp.

It was late in the evening when the two messengers arrived at Mr. Villars's house. All was dark and still about the premises. But one light was visible, and that was in the room over the kitchen.

"That is Toby's room," said Pomp. "Stay here, Cudjo, while I give him a call."

"Stay yuself," said Cudjo, "and lef dis chil' go. Me know Toby; you don't."

So Pomp remained on the watch while Cudjo climbed the tree by which Penn had descended, scrambled up over the shed-roof, reached the window, opened it, and thrust in his head.

Toby, who was just going to bed, heard the movement, saw the frightful apparition, and with a shriek dived under the bedclothes, where he lay in an agony of fear, completely hidden from sight, while Cudjo, grinning maliciously, climbed into the room.

"See hyar, ye fool! none ob dat! none ob your playin' possum wid me!" said the visitor, rolling Toby over, while Toby held the clothes tighter and tighter, as if to show a lock of wool or the tip of an ear would have been fatal. "Me's Cudjo! don't ye know Cudjo? Me come for de gemman's clo'es!"

"Hey? dat you, Cudjo?" said Toby, venturing at length to peep out. Wha—wha—what de debil you want hyar?"

"De gemman sent me. Dis yer letter's for your massy."

"De gemman?" cried Toby, jumping up. "Not Mass' Penn? not Mass' Hapgood?"

Immense was his astonishment on being assured that Penn was alive, recovering, and in need of garments. Carl, who had been awakened in the next room by the noise, now came in to see what was the matter. He recognised Penn's handwriting on the note, and immediately hastened with it to Virginia's room. A minute after she was reading it to her father at his bedside. It was written with a pencil on a leaf torn from a little blank book in which Pomp kept a sort of diary; but never had gilt-edged or perfumed billet afforded the blind old minister and his daughter such unalloyed delight.

It was long past midnight when Pomp and Cudjo returned to the cave, bringing with them not only Penn's garments, but a goodly stock of provisions, which Cudjo had hinted to Toby would be acceptable, and, more precious still, a letter from Mr. Villars, written by his daughter's own hand.

Penn now began to sit up a little every day. Gloomy as the cave was, it was not an unwholesome abode, even for an invalid. The atmosphere

was pure, cool, and bracing; the temperature uniform. Nor did Penn suffer inconvenience from dampness, though often, in the deep stillness of the night, he could hear the far-off faint and melancholy murmur of dropping water in the hollow recesses of the cavern beyond.

One day, as soon as he was well enough for the undertaking, Pomp ordered Cudjo to light torches and show them the hidden wonders of his habitation. Cudjo was delighted with the honour. He ran on before, waving the flaring pine-knots over his head, and shouting.

Penn's astonishment was profound. Keen as had been his curiosity as to what was beyond the shadowy walls the fire dimly revealed, he had formed no conception of the extent and sublimity of the various galleries, chambers, glittering vaults, and falling waters, embosomed there in the mountain.

"Dis yer all my own house!" Cudjo kept repeating, with fantastic grimaces of satisfaction. "Me found him all my own self. Nobody war eber hyar afore me; Pomp am de next, and you's de on'y white man eber seen dis yer cave."

It grew light as they proceeded, Cudjo's torch paled, and the waters of a subterranean stream they were following caught gleams of the struggling day from an opening beyond. Climbing over fragments of huge tumbled rocks, and up an earthy bank, Penn found himself in the bottom of an immense chasm. It had apparently been formed by the sinking down of the roof of the cave with a tremendous superincumbent weight of forest trees. There, on an island, so to speak, in the midst of the subterranean darkness, they were growing still, their lofty tops barely reaching the level of the mountain above.

"It was out of this sink I saw the wild beast climbing that turned out to be Cudjo," said Pomp.

"Dat ar am de tree," said Cudjo. "No oder way but dat ar to get up out of dis yer hole."

"What a terrible place!" said Penn, little thinking at the time how much more terrible it was soon to become as a scene of deadly human conflict.

Beyond the chasm the stream flowed on into still more remote parts of the cave. But Penn had seen enough for one day, and the torch-bearing Cudjo guided them back to the spot from which they had started.

Penn had now completely won the confidence of the blacks, who no longer placed any restrictions on his movements. It had been their original purpose never to suffer him to leave the cave without being blindfolded. But now, having shown him one opening, they freely permitted him to pass out by the other. This was that by which he had been brought in, and

which was used by the blacks themselves for all ordinary occasions. It was a mere fissure in the mountain, hidden from external view by thickets. Above rose steep ledges of rocks, thickly covered with earth and bushes. Below yawned an immense ravine, far down in the cool dark depths of which a little streamlet flowed.

Pomp piloted his guest through the thickets, and along a narrow shelf, from which the ascent to the barren ledges was easy. Upon these they sat down. It was a beautiful April day. This was Penn's first visit to the upper world since he was brought to the cave. The scene filled him with rapture; the loveliness of earth and sky intoxicated him. Here he was among the rugged ranges of Cumberland Mountains, in the heart of Tennessee. On each side they rolled away in tremendous billows of forest-crowned rocks. The ravines in their sides opened into little dells, and these spread out into a broad and magnificent valley, chequered with farms, streaked with roads, and dotted with dwellings. Spring seemed to have come in a night. It was chill March weather when Penn left the world, which was now warm with sweet south winds, and green with April verdure.

"How beautiful! how beautiful!" said he. "No wonder, Pomp, you love the mountains so!"

"It is doubtful if they leave the mountains in peace much longer," said Pomp. He had heard the night before that fighting had begun at Charleston, and the news had stirred his soul. "The country is all alive with excitement, and the waves of its fury will reach us here before long. Take this glass, sir: you can see soldiers marching through the streets."

"They are marching past my school-house!" said Penn. "I had hoped the storm would soon blow over, and that it would be safe for me to go peaceably about my business."

"The storm," said Pomp, his eyes dilating, his features kindling with a wild joy, "is hardly begun yet! This continent is going to shake with such a convulsion as was never before. It is going to shake till the last chain of the slave is shaken off, and the sin is punished, and God says, 'It is enough!'" He spoke with such thrilling earnestness that Penn regarded him with astonishment.

CHAPTER XVII.

PENN'S FOOT KNOCKS DOWN A MUSKET.

WEEKS passed. But now every day brought to Penn increasing anxiety of mind with regard to his situation. His abhorrence of war was as strong as ever, and his great principle of non-resistance had

scarcely been shaken. But how was he to avoid participating in scenes of violence if he remained in Tennessee? And how was his escape from the state to be effected?

"You are welcome to a home with us as long as you will stay," said Pomp. "I shall miss you—even Cudjo will hate to see you go."

Penn thanked him, fully appreciating their kindness; but his heart was yearning for other things.

Day after day he lingered still, however. The difficulties in the way of escape thickened, instead of diminishing. In February the people of Tennessee had voted against secession. Not content with this, the governor called an extra session of the legislature, which proceeded to carry the state out of the Union. On the sixth of May an ordination of separation was passed, to be submitted to the vote of the people on the eighth of June. But without waiting for the will of the people to be made manifest, the authors of this plan went on to act precisely as if the state had seceded. A league was formed with the Confederate States, the control of all the troops raised in Tennessee was given to Jefferson Davis, and troops from the cotton states were sent in to make good the work thus begun. The June election, which took place under this reign of terror, resulted in Tennessee seceding.

The state authorities also achieved a politic stroke by disarming the people. Every owner of a gun was compelled to give it up, or pay a heavy fine. The arms thus secured went to equip the troops raised for the Confederacy, while the Union cause was left crippled and defenceless. Many firelocks were of course kept concealed: some were taken to pieces, and the pieces scattered—the barrel here, the stock there, and the lock in still another place—to come together again only at the will of the owner; but, as a general thing, the Union men could not be said to have arms. It was in those times that the precaution of Stackridge and his fellow-patriots was justified. The secrecy with which they had conducted their night-meetings and drills, though seemingly unnecessary at first, saved them from much inconvenience when the full tide of secession set in. They were suspected indeed, and it was believed they had arms; but they still met in safety, and the place where their arms were deposited remained undiscovered.

All this time, Penn had no money with which to defray the expenses of travel. When his school was broken up, several hundred dollars were due to him for his services. This sum the trustees of the academy placed to his credit in the Curryville Bank; but in consequence of a recent enactment, designed to annoy Union men, he could not draw the money without appearing personally and first taking the oath of allegiance to the Confederate Government.

Meanwhile he learned to rough it on the mountain with the fugitives. Pomp taught him the use of the rifle, and he was soon able to shoot, dress, and cook his own dinner. He grew robust with the exercise and exposure.

At length, one morning at breakfast, he informed Pomp and Cudjo of his intention to leave them—to return secretly to the village, place himself under the protection of certain Unionists he knew, and attempt, with their assistance, to make his way out of the state.

"Why go down there at all?" said Pomp. "If you are determined to leave us, let me be your guide. I will take you over the mountains into Kentucky, where you will be safe. It will be a long, hard journey, but you are strong now; we will take it leisurely, killing our game by the way."

"You are very kind—and——"

Penn blushed and stammered. The truth was, he was willing to risk his life to see Virginia once more, and the thought of quitting the state without bidding her good-bye was intolerable to him.

"And I may possibly be glad to accept your proposal. But I am determined to try the other way first."

Both Pomp and Cudjo endeavoured to dissuade him from the undertaking, but in vain. That evening he took his departure. The blacks accompanied him to the foot of the mountain. Notwithstanding the friendship and gratitude he had all along felt towards them, he had not foreseen how painful would be the separation from them.

"I never quitted friends more reluctantly!" he said, choked with his emotion. "Never, never shall I forget you. Let me hope we shall meet again, when I can make you some return for your kindness."

"We may meet again, and sooner than you suppose," said Pomp. "If you find escape too difficult, be sure and come back to us. Ah, I seem to foresee that you will come back."

With this prediction ringing in his ears, and filling him with vague forebodings, Penn went his way; while the negroes, having shaken hands with him in sorrowful silence, returned to their savage mountain home.

The night was not dark, and Penn, having been guided to a bridle-path that led to the town, experienced no difficulty in finding his way alone. He approached the minister's house from the fields. Although late in the evening, the windows were still lighted. He was surprised to see men walking to and fro by the house, and to hear their footsteps on the piazza floor. He drew near enough to discern that the men carried muskets. Then the truth flashed upon him: they were soldiers guarding the house.

Whether they were there to protect the venerable Unionist from mob-violence, or to prevent his escape, Penn could only conjecture. In either case it would have been extremely indiscreet for him to enter the house

Bitter disappointment filled him, mingled with apprehensions for the safety of his friends, and remorse at the thought that he himself had, although unintentionally, been instrumental in drawing down upon them the vengeance of the secessionists.

Penn next thought of Stackridge. By a circuitous route he came in sight of his house. There were lights there also, although it must have been near midnight. And as Penn discerned them, he became aware of loud voices engaged in angry altercation around the farmer's door. It was no time for him to approach. He stole away as noiselessly as he had come. In the still, quiet night he paused, asking himself what he should do.

The academy was not far off. He remembered that he had left there, among other things, a pocket Bible, a gift from his sister, which he wished to preserve. Perhaps it was there still; perhaps he could get in and recover it. At all events, he had plenty of leisure on his hands, and could afford to make the trial.

He heard the mounted patrol pass by, and waited for the sound of hoofs to die in the distance; then cautiously he drew near the gloomy and silent school-house. Not doubting but the door was locked—for he still had the key with him which he had turned for the last time when he walked out in defiance of the lynchers—he resolved not to unlock it, but to keep in the rear of the building, and enter, if possible, by a window.

The window was unfastened, as it had ever remained since he had opened it, on that memorable occasion, to communicate with Carl. Softly he raised the sash, and softly he crept in. His foot, however, struck an object on the desk, and swept it down. It fell with a loud rattling sound upon the floor.

It was a musket, the owner of which bounded up on the instant from a bench where he was lying, and seized Penn by the leg. The school-house had been turned into a barrack-room for recruits, and the late master found that he had descended upon a squad of Confederate soldiers. Lights were struck, and the sleepy sentinels, rubbing their eyes open, recognised, struggling in the arms of their companion, the unfortunate young Quaker.

"I knowed 'twas him! I knowed 'twas him!" cried his overjoyed captor, who proved to be no other than Silas Ropes' worthy friend Gad. "I heern him gittin' inter the winder, but I kept dark till he knocked my gun down; then I grabbed him! He's a traitor, and this time will meet a traitor's doom!"

"My friends," said Penn, recovering from the agitation of his first surprise and struggle, "I am in your power. It is perhaps the best thing that could happen to me, for I have committed no crime, and I cannot

doubt but that I shall receive justice all the sooner for this accident. You need not take the trouble to bind me; I shall not attempt to escape."

His captors, however, among whom he recognised with some uneasiness more than one of those who had been engaged in lynching him, persisted in binding him upon a bench, in no very comfortable position, and then set a guard over him for the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

EARLY the next morning Virginia Villars overheard the soldiers conversing on the piazza. The mention of a certain name arrested her attention. She listened. What they said terrified her. Penn Hapgood had been apprehended during the night, and his trial by drum-head court-martial was at that moment proceeding.

"Mr. Pepperill!" she called in a scarcely audible whisper, and, looking round, Daniel saw her alarmed face at the window. Daniel was one of the soldiers who had been detailed to guard the house. Strongly against his will, he had been compelled to enlist.

"What, marm?" said Pepperill meekly.

"Is it true what that man is saying?"

"About the schoolmaster? I—I'm afeard it ar true. They've cotched him, marm, and there's men that's swore the death of him, marm."

Virginia flew to inform her father. The old man rose up instantly, forgetting his blindness, forgetting his own feebleness, and the danger into which he would have rushed, to go and plead Penn's cause.

Fortunately, perhaps, for him, the guard crossed their muskets before him, refusing to let him pass. Their orders were, not only to defend the house, but also to prevent his leaving it.

"Then I will go alone," said Carl, who was to have been his guide. And scarcely waiting to receive instructions from Virginia and her father, he ran out, slipping between the soldiers, who had no orders to detain any one but the minister, and ran to the academy.

The mockery of a trial was over. The prisoner had been condemned. The penalty pronounced against him was death. Already the noose was dangling from a tree, and some soldiers were bringing from the school-house a table to serve as a scaffold. Silas Ropes, who had a feather stuck in his cap, and wore an old rusty scabbard at his side, and flourished a sword, enjoying the title of "lieutenant," obtained for him through Brthewood's influence; Lysander Sprowl, who had been honoured with a

captaincy from the same source, and who, though a forger, and late a fugitive from justice, now boldly defied the power of the civil authorities to arrest him, trusting to the protection of the Confederate Government, which virtually proclaimed to the robber and murderer, "Become now a soldier in the Confederate cause, and your crimes shall be forgiven you" —these, and other persons of like character, appeared chiefly active in Penn's case. They had no right whatever to constitute themselves a court-martial and bring him to trial, they knew perfectly well. They had not waited even for a shadow of authority from their commanding officer. What they were about to do was nothing more nor less than murder.

Penn, with his hands tied behind him, and surrounded by a violent rabble, some armed and others unarmed, was already mounted upon the table, when Carl arrived, and attempted to force his way through the crowd.

"Feller-citizens and soldiers!" cried Lieutenant Ropes, standing on a chair beside the scaffold, "this here man has jest been proved to be a traitor and a spy, and he is about to expatiate his guilt on the gallus."

Two men then mounted the table, passed the noose over Penn's neck, drew it close, and leaped down again.

"Now," said Ropes, "if you've got any confession to make 'fore the table is jerked out from under ye, you can ease your mind. Only le' me suggest, if you don't mean to confess, you'd better hold yer tongue."

Penn, pale, but perfectly self-possessed, expecting no mercy, no reprieve, made answer in a clear, strong voice—

"I can't confess, for I am not guilty. I die an innocent man. I appeal to Heaven, before whose bar we must all appear, for the justice you deny me."

In his shirt-sleeves, his head uncovered, his feet bare, his naked throat inclosed by the murderous cord, his hands bound behind him, he stood awaiting his fate. Carl in the meantime struggled in vain to break through the ring of soldiers that surrounded the extemporised scaffold—screamed in vain to obtain a hearing.

"Let him go, and you may hang me in his place!"

The soldiers answered with a brutal laugh—as if there would be any satisfaction in hanging him! But the offer of self-sacrifice on the part of the devoted Carl touched one heart at least. Penn, who had maintained a firm demeanour up to this time, was almost unmanned by it.

"God bless you, dear Carl! Remember that I loved you. Be always honest and upright; then, if you die the victim of wrong, it will be your oppressors who will be most unhappy. Good-bye, dear Carl! Bear my farewell to those we love. Don't stay and see me die, I entreat you!"

Yet Carl stayed, sobbing with grief and rage.

"Why don't you hurry up this business?" cried Lysander Sprowl angrily, coming out of the school-house. "Somebody tie a handkerchief over his eyes, and get through some time to-day."

"All right, cap'm," said Ropes. "Make ready now, boys, and take away this table in a hurry when I give the word."

"Hold on, there! What's going on?" cried an unexpected voice, and a recruiting officer from the village made his appearance, riding upon a white horse.

The summary proceedings were stayed and the case explained. The man listened with an air of grim official importance, his coarse red countenance betraying not a gleam of sympathy with the prisoner. Yet being the superior in rank to any officer present (Silas called him "kunnel"), besides being the only one of them all who had been regularly commissioned by the Confederate Government, this man held Penn's fate in his hands.

"Hanging's too good for such scoundrels," he said, frowning at the prisoner. "As for this particular case, there's only one thing to be said: his life shall be spared on only one condition."

Carl's heart almost stood still in his eagerness to listen. Even Penn felt a faint—a very faint—pulse of hope in his breast. The "kunnel" went on—

"Let him take his choice—either to hang or enlist. What do you say, youngster? Which do you prefer—the death of a traitor, or the glorious career of a soldier in the Confederate Army?"

"It is impossible for me, sir," said Penn, in a voice of deep feeling and unalterable conviction—"it is impossible for me to bear arms against my country!"

"But the Confederate States shall be your country, and a country to be proud of!" said the man.

"I am a citizen of the United States; to the United States I owe allegiance," said Penn. "So far from being a traitor, I am willing to die rather than appear one."

"Then you won't enlist?"

"No, sir."

"Not even to save your life?"

"Not even to save my life!"

"Then," growled the man, turning away, "if you will be such a fool I've nothing more to say."

So it only remained for Penn to submit quietly to his fate. The executioners laid hold of the table, and waited for the order to remove it.

But just then Carl, breaking through the crowd, threw himself before the officer's horse.

"Oh, Colonel Derring! hear me—von vord!"

"Von vord!" repeated the officer with a coarse laugh, mocking him. "What's that, you Dutchman?"

"You vill let him go, and I shall volunteer in his place!" said Carl.

"You!" The officer regarded him critically. Carl, though so young, was very sturdy. "You offer yourself as a substitute, eh, if I will spare his life?"

"Carl!" cried Penn, "I forbid you! You shall not commit that sin for me! Better a thousand times that I should die than that you should be a rebel in arms against your country."

"I have no country," answered Carl, ingeniously excusing himself. "I am vot this man says, a Tuchman. I vill enlisht mit him, and he vill shpare your life."

"Boy, it's a bargain," said Colonel Derring, whose passion for obtaining recruits overruled every other consideration. "Cut that fellow's cords, lieutenant, and let him go. Come along with me, Dutchy."

Ropes obeyed, and Penn, bewildered, almost stunned by the sudden change in his destiny, saw himself released, and beheld, as in a dream, poor Carl marching off as his substitute to the recruiting station.

"Now let me give you one word of advice," said Captain Sprowl in his ear. "Don't let another night find you within twenty miles off that halter there, if you wouldn't have your neck in it again."

"Will you give me a safe-conduct?" said Penn, who thought the advice excellent, and would have been only too glad to act upon it.

"I've no authority," said Sprowl. "You must take care of yourself."

Penn looked around upon the ferocious, disappointed faces watching him, and felt that he might about as well have been despatched in the first place as to be let loose in the midst of such a pack of wolves thirsting for his blood. He did not despair, however, but, putting on his clothes, determined to make one final and desperate effort to escape.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

WALKING off quickly across the field towards Mr. Sprowl's house, he turned suddenly aside from the path and plunged into the woods.

He soon perceived that he was followed. A man—only one—came through the undergrowth. Penn stopped. "God forgive me!" he said

within himself, "but this is more than human nature can bear!" He had been, as it were, smitten on one cheek and on the other also: it was time to smite back. He picked up a club—his nerves became like steel as he grasped it—his eyes flashed fire.

The man advanced; he was unarmed. Suddenly Penn dropped his club, and uttered a cry of joy. It was his friend Stackridge.

"What! the Quaker will fight?" said the farmer with a grim smile.

"That shows," said Penn, bursting into tears as he wrung the farmer's hand, "that I have been driven nearly insane."

"It shows that some of the insanity has been driven out of you!" replied Stackridge, beginning to have hopes of him. "If you had taken my pistol and used it freely in the first place, or at least shown a good will to use it, you'd have proved yourself a good deal more of a man in my estimation, and been quite as well off."

"Perhaps," murmured Penn, convinced that this passive submission to martyrdom was but a sorry part to play.

"But now to business," said Stackridge. "You must get away as quickly and secretly as possible, unless you mean to stay and fight it out. I am here to help you. I have a horse in the woods here at your disposal. I thought there might be such a thing as your slipping through their hands, and so I took this precaution. I will show you a bridle-road that will take you to the house of a friend of mine who is a hearty Unionist. You can leave my horse with him. He will help you on to the house of some friend of his, who will do the same, and so you will manage to get out of the state. I advise you to travel by night as a general thing, but just now it seems necessary that you should see a little hard riding by daylight. You'll find some luncheon in the saddle-bags. When you get into some pretty thick woods leave the road, and find a good place to tie up till night, then go on cautiously to my friend's house. I'll give you full directions while we're finding the horse."

They made haste to the spot where the animal was tied.

"He has been well fed," said the farmer. "You will water him at the first brook you cross, and let him browse when you stop. Now just trade that coat for one that will make you look a little less like a Quaker schoolmaster."

He had brought one of his own coats, which he made Penn put on, and then exchanged hats with him. Penn was admirably disguised. Brief, then, were the thanks he uttered from his overflowing heart, short the leavetakings. He was mounted. Stackridge led the horse through the bushes to the bridle-path.

"Now don't let the grass grow under your feet till you are at least five

miles away. If you meet anybody, get along without words if you can; if you can't, let words come to blows as quick as you please, and then put faith in Dobbin's heels."

Again, for the last time, he made Penn the offer of a pistol. There was no leisure for idle arguments on the subject. The weapon was accepted. The two wrung each other's hands in silence: there were tears in the eyes of both. Then Stackridge gave Dobbin a resounding slap, and the horse bounded away, bearing his rider swiftly out of sight in the woods.

All this had passed so rapidly that Penn had scarcely time to think of anything but the necessity of immediate flight. But during that solitary ride through the forest he had ample leisure for reflection. He thought of the mountain cave, whose gloomy but quiet shelter, whose dark but nevertheless humane and hospitable inmates, he seemed to have quitted weeks ago, so crowded with experiences had been the few hours since last he shook Pomp and Cudjo by the hand. He thought of Virginia and her father, to visit whom for perhaps the last time he had incurred the risk of descending into the valley—whom now he felt, with a strangely swelling heart, that he might never see again. And he thought with grief, pity, and remorse of Carl, a soldier now for his sake.

These things, and many more, agitated him as he spurred the farmer's horse along the narrow, shaded, lonesome path. He met an old man on horseback, with a bright-faced girl riding behind him on the crupper, who bade him a pleasant good morning, and pursued their way. Next came some boys driving mules laden with sacks of corn. At last Penn saw two men in butternut suits with muskets on their shoulders. He knew by their looks that they were secessionists hastening to join their friends in town. They regarded him suspiciously as he came galloping up. Penn perceived that some off-hand word was necessary in passing them.

"Hurry on with those guns!" he cried, "they are wanted!"

And he dashed away, as if his sole business was to hurry up guns for the Confederate cause.

He met with no other adventure that day. He followed Stackridge's directions implicitly, and at evening, leaving his horse tied in the woods, approached on foot the house to which he had been sent.

He was cordially received by the same old man whom he had seen riding to town in the morning with a bright-faced girl clinging behind him. At a hint from Stackridge the man had hastily ridden home again, passing Penn at noon while he lay hidden in the woods; and here he was, honest, friendly, vigilant, to receive and protect his guest.

"You did well," he said, "to turn off up the mountain, for I am not the

only man that passed you there. You have been pursued. Three persons have gone on after you. I met them as I was going into town; they inquired of me if I had seen you, and when I got home I found they had passed here in search of you. They have not yet gone back."

This was unpleasant news. Yet Penn was soon convinced that he had been extremely fortunate in thus throwing his pursuers off his track. It was far better that they should have gone on before him than that they should be following close upon his heels.

He stayed with the farmer all night, and departed with him early the next morning to pursue his journey. It was not safe for him to keep the road, for he might at any moment meet his pursuers returning; accordingly, the old man showed him a circuitous route along the base of the mountains, which could be travelled only on foot and by daylight.

"Here I leave you," said his kind old guide when they had reached the banks of a mountain stream. "Follow this run, and it will take you round to the road, about a mile this side of my brother's house. There's a bridge near which you can wait when you get to it. If your pursuers go back past my house, then I will harness up and drive on to the bridge, and water my horse there. You will see me, and get in to ride, and I will take you to my brother's, and make some arrangement for helping you on still farther to-night."

So they parted, the lonely fugitive feeling that the kindness of a few such men, scattered like salt through the state, was enough to redeem it from the fate of Sodom, which otherwise, by its barbarism and injustice, it would have seemed to deserve.

Following the stream in its windings through a wilderness of thickets and rocks, he reached the bridge about the middle of the afternoon. His progress had been leisurely. The day was warm, bright, and tranquil. The stream poured over ledges, or gushed among mossy stones, or tumbled down jagged rocks in flashing cascades. Its music filled him with memories of home, with love that swelled his heart to tears, with longings for peace and rest.

These thoughts of a pleasant past and a doubtful future thronged confusedly in the young man's mind, when an incident occurred to bring form, sharply and suddenly, out of his reflections.

He had reached the bridge. He looked up and down the road, and saw no human being. It was hardly time to expect the farmer yet; so he climbed down upon some dry stones in the bed of the stream, where he could watch for his coming, and be at the same time hidden from view and sheltered from the sun.

He had not been long in that situation when he heard the sound of

hoofs. It was not his white-haired farmer whom he saw approaching, but two men on horseback. They were coming from the same direction in which he was looking for the old man. As they drew near, he discovered that one was a negro. The face of the other he recognised shortly afterwards. It was that of Mr. Augustus Bythewood, who was evidently taking advantage of the fine weather to make a little journey, accompanied by a black servant.

Penn's heart contracted within him as he thought of his friend Pomp, and of the wrongs he had suffered at this man's hands. He thought of his own safety too, and crept under the bridge. He had time, however, before he disappeared, to catch a glimpse of three other horsemen coming from the North. His heart beat fast, for he knew in an instant that these were his pursuers returning.

He had already prepared for himself a good hiding-place in a cavity between the two logs that supported the bridge. Upon the abutment, close under the trembling planks, he lay, when Bythewood and his man rode over. The dust rattled upon him through the cracks, and sifted down into the stream. The thundering and shaking of the planks ceased, but he listened in vain to hear the hoofs of the two horses clattering off in the distance. To his alarm he perceived that Bythewood and his man had halted on the other side of the bridge, and were going to water their horses in the bed of the stream. Clashing and rattling down the steep stony banks, and plashing into the water, came the foam-streaked animals. The negro rode one, and led the other by the bridle. There he sat in the saddle, watching the eager drinking of the thirsty beasts, and pulling up their heads occasionally to prevent them from swallowing too fast or too much—all in full sight of the concealed schoolmaster. Bythewood, after dismounting, also walked down to the edge of the stream in full view.

Such was the situation when the three horsemen from the North arrived. They all rode their animals down the bank into the water. Penn had not been mistaken as to their character and business. Two of them were the men who had adjusted the noose the day before. The third was no less a personage than Captain Lysander Sprowl. Penn lay breathless and trembling in his hiding-place; for those men were but a few yards from him, and all in such plain view that it seemed inevitable that they must discover him.

"What luck?" said Bythewood carelessly, seating himself on a rock and lighting a cigar.

"The rascal has given us the slip," said Lysander from his horse. "I believe we have passed him, and so on our way back we'll search the house of every man suspected of Union sentiments. He started off with

Stackridge's horse, and we tracked him easy at first, but to-day we haven't once heard of him."

"It's my opinion he don't intend to leave the state," said Bythewood, coolly smoking. "Sam, walk those horses up and down the road till I call you. I want a little private talk with the captain."

The captain's attendants likewise took the hint, reined their horses up out of the water, rode over the shaking bridge and Penn's head under it, and proceeded to search the next house for him, while Sprowl was conversing with Augustus.

"Let's go over the other side," said Bythewood, "where we can be in the shade. The sun is powerful hot."

They accordingly walked over Penn's head a moment later, climbed down the same rocks he had descended, picked their way along the dry stones to the bridge, and took their seats in its shadow beneath him, and so near that he could easily have reached over and taken the captain's cap from his head!

CHAPTER XX.

UNDER THE BRIDGE.

"THE colonel wasn't aware of your sentiments," said Sprowl, "or he wouldn't have let him off for fifty substitutes."

"Or if you and Ropes," retorted Bythewood, "had only put through the job with the celerity I had a right to expect of you, he would have been strung up before the colonel had a chance to interfere."

And he puffed impatiently a cloud of smoke, whose fragrance was wafted to the nostrils of the listener under the planks.

"Well," said Lysander, accepting a cigar from his friend, "if he gets out of the state"—biting off the end of it—"and never shows himself here again"—rubbing a match on the stones—"you ought to be satisfied. If he stays, or comes back"—smoking—"then we'll just finish the little job we begun."

Penn lay still as death. What his thoughts were I will not attempt to say, but it must have given him a curious sensation to hear the question of his life or death thus coolly discussed by his would-be assassins over their cigars.

"Where are you bound?" asked Lysander.

"Oh, a little pleasure excursion," said Bythewood. "There's to be some lively work at home this evening, and I thought I'd better be away."

"What's going on?"

"The colonel is going to make some arrests. About fifteen or twenty

Union-shriekers will find themselves snapped up before they think of it—Stackridge among the first. 'Twas he, confound him! that helped the schoolmaster off!"

"Has the colonel orders to make the arrests?"

"No, but he takes the responsibility. It's a military necessity, and the government will bear him out in it. Every man that has been known to drill in the Union Club, and has refused to deliver up his arms, must be secured. There's no other way of putting down these dangerous fellows," said Augustus, running his jewelled fingers through his curls.

"But why do you prefer to be away when the fun is going on?"

"There may be somebody's name in the list on whose behalf I might be expected to intercede."

"Not old Villars!" exclaimed Lysander.

"Yes, old Villars," laughed Augustus, "if by that lively epithet you mean to designate your venerable father-in-law."

"By George, though, Gus! ain't it almost too bad? What will folks say?"

"Little care I! Old and blind as he is, he is really one of the most dangerous enemies to our cause. His influence is great with a certain class, and he never misses an opportunity to denounce secession. That he openly talks treason, and harbours and encourages traitors arming against the Confederate Government, is cause sufficient for arresting him with the others."

"Really," said Sprowl, chuckling as he thought of it, "'twill be better for our plans to have him out of the way."

"Yes," said Bythewood; "the girls will need protectors, and your wife will welcome you back again."

"And Virginia," added Sprowl, "will perhaps look a little more favourably on a rich, handsome, influential fellow like you! I see, I see!"

There was another who saw too—a sudden flash of light, as it were, revealing to Penn all the heartless, scheming villainy of the friendly-seeming Augustus. He grasped the Stackridge pistol; his eyes, glaring in the dark, were fixed in righteous fury on the elegant curly head.

"If I am discovered, I will surely shoot him!" he said within himself.

"The old man," suggested Sprowl, "won't live long in gaol."

"Very well," said Bythewood. "If the girls come to terms, why, we will secure their everlasting gratitude by helping him out. If they won't, we will merely promise to do everything we can for him—and do nothing."

"And the property?" said Lysander, somewhat anxiously.

"You shall have what you can get of it—I don't care for the property!" replied Bythewood, with haughty contempt. "I believe the

old man, foreseeing these troubles, has been converting his available means into Ohio railroad stock. If so, there won't be much for you to lay hold of until we have whipped the North."

"That we'll do fast enough," said Lysander confidently.

"Well, I must be travelling," said Augustus.

"And I must be looking for that miserable schoolmaster."

So saying, the young men arose from their cool seats on the stones—Lysander placing his hand, to steady himself, on the edge of the abutment within an inch of Penn's leg.

Darkness, however, favoured the fugitive, and they passed out from the shadow of the bridge without suspecting that they had held confidential discourse within arm's length of the man they were seeking to destroy. They ascended the bank, mounted their horses, and took leave of each other—Bythewood and his black man riding North, while Sprowl hastened to rejoin his companions in the search for the schoolmaster.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RETURN INTO DANGER.

TREMBLING with excitement Penn got down from the abutment, and, peering over the bank, saw his enemies in the distance.

What was to be done? Had he thought only of his own safety, his way would have been clear. But could he abandon his friends? forsake Virginia and her father when the toils of villainy were tightening around them? leave Stackridge and his compatriots to their fate, when it might be in his power to forewarn and save them?

How he, alone, suspected, pursued, and sorely in need of assistance himself, was to render assistance to others, he did not know. He did not pause to consider. He put his faith in the overruling providence of God.

"With God's aid," he said, "I will save them or sacrifice myself."

As for fighting, should fighting prove necessary, his mind was made up. The conversation of the villains under the bridge had settled that question.

Instead, therefore, of waiting for the friend who was to help him on his journey, he leaped up from under the bridge, and set out at a fast walk to follow his pursuers back to town.

He had travelled but a mile or two when he saw the farmer driving towards him in a waggon.

"Are you lost? are you crazy?" cried the astonished old man. "You are going in the wrong direction! The men have been to my house, searched it, and passed on. Get in! get in!"

"I will," said Penn, "but, Mr. Ellerton, you must turn back."

He briefly related his adventure under the bridge. The old man listened with increasing amazement.

"You are right! you are right!" he said. "We must get word to Stackridge somehow!" And turning his waggon about, he drove back over the road as fast as his horse could carry them.

It was sunset when they reached his house. There they unharnessed his horse and saddled him. The old man mounted.

"I'll do my best," he said, "to see Stackridge or some of them in season. If I fail, maybe you will succeed. But you'd better keep in the woods till dark."

Ellerton rode off at a fast trot. Penn hastened to the woods, where Stackridge's horse was still concealed. The animal had been recently fed and watered, and was ready for a hard ride. The bridle was soon on his head, and Penn on his back, and he was making his way through the woods again towards home.

As soon as it was dark, Penn came out into the open road, nor did he turn aside into the bridle-path when he reached it, because he wished to avoid travelling in company with Ellerton, who was to take that route. He also supposed that Sprowl's party would be returning that way. In this he was mistaken. Riding at a gallop through the darkness, his heart beating anxiously as the first twinkling lights of the town began to appear, he suddenly became aware of three horsemen riding but a short distance before him. They had evidently been drinking something stronger than water at the house of some good secessionist on the road, perhaps to console themselves for the loss of the schoolmaster—for these were the excellent friends who were so eager to meet with him again! They were merry and talkative, and Penn, not ambitious of cultivating their acquaintance, checked his horse.

It was too late. They had already perceived his approach, and hailed him.

What should he do? To wheel about and flee would certainly excite their suspicions; they would be sure to pursue him; and though he might escape, his arrival in town would be thus perhaps fatally delayed. The arrests might be even at that moment taking place.

He reflected, "There are but three of them; I may fight my way through if it comes to that."

Accordingly he rode boldly up to the assassins, and in a counterfeit voice answered their hail. He was but little known to either of them, and there was a chance that, in the darkness, they might fail to recognise him.

"Where are you from?" demanded Sprowl.

"From a little this side of Bald Mountain," said Penn—which was true enough.

"Where bound?"

"Can't you see for yourself?" said Penn, assuming a reckless, independent air. "I am following my horse's nose, and that is going pretty straight into Curryville."

"Glad of your company," said Sprowl, riding gaily alongside. "What's your business in town, stranger?"

"Well," replied Penn, "I don't mind telling you that my business is to see if I and my horse can find something to do for old Tennessee."

"Ah! cavalry?" suggested Lysander, well pleased.

"I should prefer cavalry service to any other," answered Penn.

"There's where you're right," said Sprowl, and he proceeded to enlighten Penn on the prospects of raising a cavalry company in Curryville.

"Did you meet any person on the road, travelling North?"

"What sort of a person?"

"A young feller, rather slim, brown hair, blue eyes, with a half-hung look, a perfect specimen of a sneaking abolition schoolmaster."

"I—I don't remember meeting any such a person," said Penn, as if consulting his memory. "I met *two* men, though, this side of old Bald. One of them was a rather gentlemanly-looking fellow, but I think his hair was black and curly."

"The schoolmaster's har is wavy, and purty dark, I call it," said one of Sprowl's companions.

"He must have been the man!" said Lysander, suddenly stopping his horse. "What sort of a chap was with him? Did he look like a Union-shrieker?"

"Now I think of it," said Penn, "if that man wasn't a Unionist at heart, I am greatly mistaken. His sympathies are with the Lincolnites I know by his looks!" He neglected to add, however, that the man was black.

Sprowl was excited.

"It was some tory, piloting the schoolmaster! Boys, we must wheel about! It never 'll do for us to go home as long as we can hear of him alive in the state. Remember the pay promised if we catch him."

"Luck to you!" cried Penn, riding on, while Sprowl turned back in ludicrous pursuit of his own worthy friend Mr. Augustus Bythewood and his negro man Sam.

Penn lost no time laughing at the joke. His heart was too full of trouble for that. It had seemed to him, at each moment of delay, that

the blind old minister was even then being torn from his home—that he could hear Virginia's sobs of distress and cries for help. He urged his horse into a gallop once more, and struck into a path across the fields. He rode to the edge of the orchard, dismounted, tied the horse, and hastened on foot to the house.

The guard was gone from the piazza, and all seemed quiet about the premises. The kitchen was dark. He advanced quickly, but noiselessly, to the door. It was open. He went in.

"Toby!" No answer. "Carl! Carl!" he called in a louder voice. No Carl replied. Then he remembered—what it seemed so strange that he could even for an instant forget—that Carl was in the rebel ranks, for his sake.

He had seen a light in the sitting-room. He found the door, and knocked. No answer came. He opened it softly, and entered. There burned the lamp on the table—there stood the vacant chairs—he was alone in the deserted room.

"Virginia!"

He started at his own voice, which sounded, in the hollow apartment, like the whisper of a ghost.

He was proceeding still farther, wondering at the stillness, terrified by his own forebodings, feeling in his appalled heart the contrast between this night, and this strange, furtive visit, and the happy nights, and the many happy visits, he had made to his dear friends there only a few short months before, pausing to assure himself that he was not walking in a dream, when he heard a footstep, a flutter, and saw spring towards him through the door, pale as an apparition, Virginia. Speechless with emotion, she could not utter his name, but she testified the joy with which she welcomed him by throwing herself, not into his arms, but upon them, as he extended his hands to greet her.

"What has happened?" said Penn.

"O my father!" said the girl. And she bowed her face upon his arm, clinging to him as if he were her brother, her only support.

"Where is he?" asked Penn, alarmed, and trembling with sympathy for that delicate, agitated, fair young creature, whom sorrow had so changed since he saw her last.

"They have taken him—the soldiers!" she said.

And by these words Penn knew that he had come too late.

CHAPTER XXII.

STACKRIDGE'S COAT AND HAT GET ARRESTED.

THE outrage had been committed not more than twenty minutes before. Toby had followed his old master, to see what was to be done with him, and Virginia and her sister were in the street before the house, awaiting the negro's return, when Penn arrived.

"You could have done no good, even if you had come sooner," said Virginia. "There is but one man who could have prevented this cruelty."

"Why not send for him?"

"Alas! he left town this very day. He is a secessionist; but he has great influence, and appears very friendly to us."

Penn started, and looked at her keenly.

"His name?"

"Augustus Bythewood."

Penn recoiled.

"What's the matter?"

"Virginia, that man is thy worst enemy! I did not tell thee how I learned that the arrests were to be made. But I will!" And he told her all.

"Oh," said she, "if I had only believed what my heart has always said of that man, and trusted less to my eyes and ears, he would never have deceived me! If he, then, is an enemy, what hope is there? O my father!"

"Do not despair!" answered Penn, as cheerfully as he could. "Something may be done. Stackridge and his friends may have escaped. I will go and see if I can hear anything of them. Have faith in our Heavenly Father, my poor girl! be patient! be strong! All, I am sure, will yet be well."

"But you too are in danger! You must not go!" she exclaimed, instinctively detaining him.

"I am in greater danger here, perhaps, than elsewhere."

"True! true! Go to your negro friends in the mountain—there is yet time! go!" and she hurriedly pushed him from her.

"When I find that nothing can be done for thy father, then I will return to Pomp and Cudjo—not before."

And he glided out of the back door just as Salina entered from the street.

He left the horse where he had tied him, and hastened on foot to Stackridge's house.

He approached with great caution. There was a light burning in the house, as on other summer evenings at that hour. The negroes—for Stackridge was a slaveholder—had retired to their quarters. There were no indications of any disturbance having taken place. Penn reconnoitred carefully, and, perceiving no one astir about the premises, advanced towards the door.

"Halt!" shouted a voice of authority.

And immediately two men jumped out from the well-curb, within which they had been concealed. Others at the same time rushed to the spot from dark corners, where they had lain in wait. Almost in an instant, and before he could recover from his astonishment, Penn found himself surrounded.

"You are our prisoner, Mr. Stackridge!" And half-a-dozen bayonets converged at the focus of his breast.

The young man comprehended the situation in a moment. Stackridge had not been arrested; he was absent from home; these ambushed soldiers had been waiting his return; and they had mistaken the schoolmaster for the farmer.

The night was just light enough to enable them to recognise the coat and hat which had been Stackridge's, and which Penn still wore as a disguise. Features they could not discern so easily. The prisoner made no resistance, for that would have been useless; no outcry, for that would have revealed to them their mistake. He submitted without a word; and they marched him away, just as his supposed wife and children flew to the door, calling frantically, "Father! father!" and lamenting his misfortune.

By proclaiming his own identity the prisoner would have gained nothing, probably, but a halter on the spot. On the other hand, by accepting the part forced upon him, he was at least gaining time. It might be, too, that he was rendering an important service to the real Stackridge by thus withdrawing the soldiers from their ambush, and giving him an opportunity to reach home and learn the danger he had escaped.

These considerations passed rapidly through his mind. He slouched his hat over his eyes, and marched with sullen, stubborn mien. In this manner he was taken to the village, and conducted to an old storehouse, which had lately been turned into a guard-house by the Confederate authorities.

There was a great crowd around the dimly-lighted door, and other prisoners, similarly escorted, were going in. Amid the press and hurry, Penn passed the sentinels still unrecognised. He immediately found himself wedged in between the wall and a number of Tennessee Union men, some terrified into silence, others enraged and defiant, but all captives like himself.

In the farther end of the room, at a desk behind the counter, with candles at each side, sat the Confederate colonel to whom Penn owed his life. He seemed to be receiving the reports of those who had conducted the arrests, and to be examining the prisoners. Beside him sat his aids and clerks. Before him Penn knew that he must soon appear. He was in darkness and disguise as yet, but he could not long avoid facing the light and the eyes of those who knew him well. What, then, would be his fate? Would he be retained a prisoner, like the rest, or delivered over to the mob that sought his life?

Taking advantage of the shadow and confusion in which he was, he slipped off his disguise, and elbowing his way through the crowd of prisoners, appeared, hat in hand and coat on arm, before the interior guard, and demanded to speak with the commanding officer.

"Sir, who are you?" said the colonel, failing at first to recognise him. Upon which Mr. Ropes, who was at his side, swore a great oath that it was the schoolmaster himself.

"But I have had no report of his arrest," cried the colonel. "How came you here, sir?"

"I wish to place myself under your protection," said Penn. "You received a substitute in my place, and ordered me to be set at liberty, but your commands have been disregarded. I have been hunted for two days, and men, calling themselves Confederate soldiers, are still pursuing me. Under these circumstances I have thought it best to appeal to you, relying upon your honour as a gentleman and an officer."

"But how came you here? Who brought in this fellow?"

Nobody could answer that question, although the leader of the party that had brought him in was at the very moment on the spot, waiting to make his report of Stackridge's arrest. As soon, therefore, as Penn could gain a hearing, he continued—

"I came in, sir, with a crowd of soldiers and prisoners, none of whom recognised me. The sentinels no doubt supposed I was arrested, and so let me pass."

"Well, sir, you have done a bold thing, and perhaps the best thing for you. Since you have voluntarily delivered yourself up, I shall feel bound to protect you; but I have only one of two alternatives to offer you—the same I offer to each of these worthy gentlemen here, giving them their choice. Take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate Government, and volunteer—that is one condition."

"I am a Northern man," replied Penn, "and owe allegiance to the United States, so that condition it is impossible for me to accept."

"Very well; I'll give you time to think of it. In the meanwhile my

only means of affording the protection you demand will be to retain you a prisoner. Guard, take this man below."

Not another word was said, and, indeed, Penn had already gained more than he hoped for, with the eyes of Lieutenant Ropes glaring on him murderously. He was conducted to a stairway that led to the cellar, and ordered to descend. He obeyed, marching down between two soldiers on guard at the door, and two more at the foot of the stairs.

It was a lugubrious subterranean apartment, lighted by a single lantern suspended from a beam. By its dim rays he discovered the figures of half-a-dozen fellow-prisoners, and in the midst of the group he recognised one the sight of whom caused him to forget all his own misfortunes in an instant.

"My dear Mr. Villars! I have found you at last!" he exclaimed, grasping the old clergyman's hand.

"Penn, is it you?" said the blind old man.

He was seated on a dry-goods box. Trembling and feeble, he arose to greet his young friend with a noble courtesy very beautiful and touching under the circumstances.

"I cannot tell thee," said Penn in a choked voice, "how grieved I am to see thee here!"

"And grieved am I that you should see me here," Mr. Villars replied. "I hoped you were a hundred miles away. I was never sorry to have your company till now. How does it happen?"

Penn made him sit down again, giving him Stackridge's coat for a cushion, and related briefly his adventures.

"It is very singular," said the old man thoughtfully. "It seems almost providential that you are here."

"I think it is so," said Penn. "I think I am here because I may be of service to you."

"Ah," replied the old man, with a tender smile, "my life is of but little value compared with yours. I am a worn-out servant; my day of usefulness is past; I am ready to go home."

"Oh, do not say thy day of usefulness is past as long as thou canst speak such words!" said Penn, deeply moved.

"Thank God, I have faith! Even in this darkest hour of my life and of my country, I think I have more faith than ever. And I have love, too—love even for those violent men who have thrown us into this dungeon."

"Yes," said one of the prisoners, "the institution will be ruined by those very men. They are worse than the abolitionists themselves, and I hate 'em worse!"

"Hate their errors, Captain Grudd—hate their crimes, but hate no man," Mr. Villars softly replied.

One by one the prisoners from above followed Penn down the dismal stairs. Only now and then a faint-hearted Unionist consented to regain his liberty by taking the oath of allegiance and "volunteering." At length the room above was cleared, and no more prisoners arrived. Penn, who had kept anxious watch for his friend Stackridge, was congratulating himself upon the perfect success of his stratagem, when the corporal who had brought him in came rushing down the stairs, accompanied by Lieutenant Ropes.

"Stackridge!" he called, searching among the prisoners. "Is Medad Stackridge here?"

No man had seen him.

"Then I tell you," said the corporal to Silas, "he is hid somewhere upstairs, or else he has escaped, for I can swear I arrested him."

"I can swear you was drunk," said Silas, much disgusted. "You have let the wust man of the lot slip through your fingers, for it's certain he ain't here."

Penn trembled for a minute, but both Ropes and the corporal passed him without a suspicion of what was agitating him, and he felt immensely relieved when they returned up the stairs, and the mystery remained unexplained.

The prisoners in the cellar were about twelve in number. Nearly all were sturdy, earnest men. Penn noticed that they were not cast down by their misfortunes, but that they whispered among themselves, exchanging glances of intelligence and defiance. At length Captain Grudd came to him, and, taking him aside, said—

"Well, professor, what do you think of the situation?"

"We seem to be at the mercy of the villains," replied Penn.

"Not so much at their mercy, either, if we choose to be men. What we want to know is, will you join us? and if there should be a little fighting to do, will you help do it?"

Penn grasped his hand.

"Show me that we have any chance of escape, and I am with you!"

"I thought you would come to it at last!" Grudd smiled grimly. "What we want, to begin with, is a few handy weapons, but we have all been disarmed. Have you anything? I noticed they did not search you, probably because you came voluntarily and gave yourself up."

"I have Stackridge's pistol. It is in the coat Mr. Villars is sitting on."

Grudd's eyes lighted up at this unexpected good news.

"It will come in play! We must shoot or strangle these fellows, and have their guns"—with a glance at the soldiers on guard.

"But the room upstairs is full of soldiers, and there is a strong guard posted outside, probably surrounding the building."

"We will have as little to do with them as possible. Young man, I have a secret for you. Do you know whose property this is?"

"Barber Jim's, I believe."

"And do you know there's a secret passage from this cellar into the cellar under Jim's shop? It was dug by Jim himself as a hiding-place for his wife and children. He had bought them, but the heirs of their former owner had set up a claim for them. After that matter was settled he showed Stackridge the place, and that's the way we came to make use of it. We stored our guns in the passage, and came through into this cellar at night to consult and drill. The store being shut, and the windows all fastened and boarded up, made a quiet place of it. As good luck would have it, the night before the military took possession Jim warned us, and we carefully put back every stone in the wall, and left. But some of our guns are still in the passage, if they have not been discovered. We have only to open the wall again to get at them. But before that can be done the guard must be disposed of."

Penn, who had listened with intense interest to this recital, drew a long breath.

"Is the passage behind the spot where Mr. Villars is sitting?"

"Within three feet of the box."

"Then I fear it is discovered. I heard a noise behind that wall not ten minutes ago."

Grudd stared. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"It must be Jim himself, or else we have been betrayed."

"Was the secret known to many?"

"To all our club and one besides," said Grudd, frowning anxiously. "Stackridge made a mistake; I told him so!"

"How?"

"We were drilling here one night when Dutch Carl came to tell us you were in danger. Stackridge said he knew the boy, and would trust him. So he brought him here. And Carl is now a rebel volunteer."

"With him your secret is safe," Penn hastened to assure the captain. "Stackridge was right. Carl——"

He paused suddenly, looking at the stairs. Even while the boy's name was on his lips, the boy himself was entering the cellar. He carried a musket. He wore the Confederate uniform. He was accompanied by Gad

and an officer. They had come to relieve the guard. The men who had previously been on duty at the foot of the stairs retired with the officer, and Gad and Carl remained in their place. Having once exchanged glances with the boy, Penn's mind was set at rest.

"He has kept your secret," he said to Grudd. "He is very shrewd, and if we need help he will help us."

But the noise Penn had heard behind the wall was troubling the captain. They retired to that part of the cellar. They had been there but a short time when a very distinct knock was heard on the stones. It sounded like a signal. Grudd responded, striking the wall with his heel as he leaned his back against it. Then followed a low whistle in the passage. The captain's dark features lighted up.

"We are safe!" he whispered in Penn's ear. "It is Stackridge himself!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FLIGHT OF THE PRISONERS.

THEN began strategy. The prisoners gathered in a group before the closed passage, and talked loud while Grudd established a communication with Stackridge. In the course of an hour a single stone in the wall had been removed. Through the aperture thus formed a bottle was introduced. This Grudd pretended afterwards to take from his pocket, and having (apparently) drunk, he offered it to his friends. All drank, or appeared to drink, in a manner that provoked Gad's thirst. He vowed that it was too bad that anything good should moisten the lips of tory prisoners while a soldier like him went thirsty.

"I never saw the time, Gad," said the captain, "when I wouldn't share a bottle with you, and I will now."

Gad held his gun with one hand and grasped the bottle with the other. Penn seized the moment when his eyes were directed upwards at the cobweb festoons that adorned the cellar, and the sound of gurgling was in his throat, to whisper in Carl's ear—

"Appear to drink, and by-and-by pass the bottle upstairs."

Carl understood the game in an instant.

"Here, you fish!" he said, in the midst of Gad's potation. "Leafe a little trop for me, vill you?"

It was some time before the torrent in Gad's throat ceased its murmuring, and he removed his eyes from the cobwebs. Then, smacking his lips and remarking that it was the right sort of stuff, he passed the bottle to Carl.

"Who's the fish this time?" said he enviously, after Carl had made believe swallow for a few seconds.

He snatched the bottle and was drinking as before, when the guard above, hearing what passed, called for a taste.

"You shust vait a minute till Gad trinks it all up, then you shall pe velcome to vot ish left," said Carl. And, possessing himself of the bottle, he handed it up to his comrades.

All the soldiers above were asleep except the sentinels. They drank freely, and returned the bottle to Gad. He had not finished it before he began to be overcome by drowsiness, its contents having been drugged for the occasion.

He sat down on the stairs, and soon slid off upon the ground. Carl, who had not in reality swallowed a drop, followed his example. Their guns were then taken from them. Penn stole softly up the stairs, and reconnoitred while Grudd and his companions opened the passage in the wall.

"All asleep!" Penn whispered, descending. "Carl!"

Carl opened one eye with a droll expression.

"Are you asleep?"

"Very," said Carl.

"Will you stay here or go with us?"

"You vill take me prisoner?"

"If you wish it."

"Say you vill plow my brains out if I say vun vord or make vun noise."

"Come, come! there's no time for fooling, Carl!"

"It ish no vooling!" And Carl insisted on Penn's making the threat. "Vell, then, I vill vake up and go 'long mit you."

Mr. Villars had been for some time sleeping soundly, for it was now long past midnight, and weariness had overcome him. Penn awoke him, but the old man refused to escape. "Go without me. I shall be too great a burden for you." But not one of his fellow-prisoners would consent to leave him behind, and, listening to their expostulations, he at length arose to accompany them.

Stackridge was in the passage with the old man Ellerton, whom Penn had sent to warn him. They had brought a supply of ammunition for the guns, which they had loaded and placed ready for use. Penn, supporting and guiding the old minister, was the first to pass through into the cellar under Jim's shop. Stackridge, preceding them with a lantern, greeted their escape with silent and grim exultation. Carl came next. Then, one by one, the others followed, each grasping his gun; the rays of the

lantern lighting up their determined faces as they emerged from the low passage, and stood erect, an eager, whispering group, around Stackridge.

Brief the consultation. Their plans were soon formed. Leaving Gad aleep in the cellar behind them; the guard asleep, the soldiers all asleep, in the room above; the sentinels outside the old storehouse keeping watch, pacing to and fro around the cellar, in which not a prisoner remained, Stackridge and his companions filed out noiselessly through Jim's closed and silent shop upon the other street, and took their way swiftly through the town.

Having appointed a place of meeting with his friends, Penn left them, and hastened alone to Mr. Villars's house. The lights had long been out. But the sisters were awake; Virginia had not even gone to bed. She was sitting by her window, gazing out on the hushed, gloomy, breathless summer night—waiting, waiting, she scarce knew for what—when she was aware of a figure approaching, and knew Penn's light, quick tap at the door.

She ran down to admit him. His story was quickly told. Toby was roused up; blankets were rolled together, and all the available provisions that could be carried were thrust into baskets.

"How shall we get news to you? You will want to hear from your father." Penn hastily thought of a plan. "Send Toby to the round rock —he knows where it is—on the side of the mountain, between nine and ten o'clock to-morrow night. I will try to communicate with him there." And Penn, bidding the young girl be of good cheer, departed as suddenly as he had arrived.

The old negro accompanied him, assisting to carry the burdens. They found Stackridge's horse where he had been fastened. Penn made Toby mount, take a basket in each hand, and hold the blankets before him on the neck of the horse; then, seizing the bridle, and running by his side, he trotted the beast away across the field in a manner that shook the old negro up in lively style.

"Oh, Massa Penn! I can't stan' dis yere! I's gwine all to pieces! I shall drap some o' dese yer tings shore!"

"You must stand it! hold on to them!" said Penn. "And now keep still, for we are near the road."

The party had halted at the rendezvous. Mr. Villars, quite exhausted by his unusual exertions, was seated on the ground when Penn came up with Toby and the horse. Toby dismounted, the old minister mounted in his place, and the negro was sent back.

All this passed swiftly and silently; the fugitives were once more on

the march, Penn walking by the old man's side. Scarce a word was spoken; the tramp of feet and the sound of the horse's hoofs alone broke the silence of the night. Suddenly a voice hailed them:—

"Who goes there?"

And they discovered some horsemen drawn up before them beside the road. It was the night-patrol.

"Friends," answered Stackridge, marching straight on.

"Halt, and give an account of yourselves!" shouted the patrol.

"We are peaceable citizens if let alone," said Stackridge. "You'd better not meddle with us."

The horsemen waited for them to pass, then, firing their pistols at the fugitives, put spurs to their horses, and galloped away towards the village.

"Don't fire!" cried Stackridge, as half-a-dozen pieces were levelled in the darkness. "We've no ammunition to throw away, and no time to lose. They'll give the alarm. Take straight to the mountains!"

Nobody had been hit. Turning aside from the road, they took their way across the broad pasture lands that sloped upwards to the rocky hills. The dark valley spread beneath them; on the side rose the dim outlines of the shadowy mountain range; over all spread a still, cloudless sky, thick-strewn with glittering stardust.

In the village the ringing of bells startled the night with a wild clamour. Stackridge laughed.

"They'll make noise enough now to wake Gad himself! But noise won't hurt anybody. Hear the drums!"

"They are coming this way," said Penn.

"Fools, to set out in pursuit of us with drums beating!" said Captain Grudd. "Very kind in them to give us notice! They should bring lighted torches too."

"Once in the mountains," said Stackridge, "we are safe. There we can defend ourselves against a hundred!"

Suddenly bells and drums were silent. "The less noise the more danger," said Stackridge. The way was growing difficult for the horse's feet. The cow-paths, which it had been easy to follow at first, disappeared among the thickets. At length, on the crest of a hill, the party halted to rest.

"Daylight!" said Stackridge, turning his face to the east.

The sky was brightening; the shadows in the valley melted slowly away; far off the cocks crew.

"Hark!" said the captain. "Do you hear anything?"

"I heard a voice!" said Carl.

"Hist!" said Penn. "Look yonder! there they come! around those bushes at the foot of the oak!"

"Sure as fate, there they are!" said the captain.

The fugitives crowded to his side, eager, grasping their gunstocks, and peering with intent eyes through the darkness in the direction in which he pointed.

"Take the horse," said Stackridge to Penn, "and lead him up through that gap out of the reach of the bullets. We'll stay and give these rascals a lesson. Go along with him, Carl, if you don't want to fight your friends."

There were not guns enough for all, and Grudd had Stackridge's revolver. There was nothing better, then, for Penn and Carl to do than to consent to this arrangement.

Penn went before, leading the horse up the dry bed of a brook. Carl followed, urging the animal from behind. Mr. Villars rode with the baggage, which had been lashed to the saddle. Only the clashing of the iron hoofs on the stones broke the stillness of the morning in the mountain solitude. Stackridge and his compatriots had suddenly become invisible, crouching among bushes and behind rocks.

The retreat of Penn and his companions was discovered by the pursuing party, who mistook it for a general flight of the fugitives. They rushed forward with a shout. They had a rugged and barren hill to ascend. Half way up the slope they saw flashes of fire burst from the rocks above, heard the rapid "crack—crackle—crack!" of a dozen pieces, and retreated in confusion down the hill again.

Stackridge and his companions coolly proceeded to reload their guns.

"They didn't know we had arms," said the farmer with a grim smile. "They'll be more cautious now."

"We've done for two or three of 'em!" said Captain Grudd. "There they lie; one is crawling off."

"Let him crawl!" said Stackridge. "Sorry to kill any of 'em; but it's about time for 'em to know we're in 'arnest."

"They've gone to cover in the laurels," said Grudd. "Let's shift our ground and watch their movements."

Penn and Carl in the meantime made haste to get the horse and its burden beyond the reach of bullets. They toiled up the bed of the brook until it was no longer passable. Huge boulders lay jammed and crowded in clefts of the mountain before them. Penn remembered the spot. He had been there in spring, when down over the rocks, now covered with lichens and dry scum, poured an impetuous torrent.

"Now I know where I am," he said. "I don't believe it is possible to

get the horse any farther. We will wait here for our friends. Mr. Villars, if you will dismount, we will try to get you up on the bank."

"I pity you, my children," said the old man. "You should never have encumbered yourselves with such a burden as I am. I can neither fight nor run. Is it sunrise yet?"

"It is sunrise, and a beautiful morning! The fresh rays come to us here, sifted through the dewy trees. Sit down on this rock. Find the luncheon, Carl. Ah, Carl!"—Penn regarded the boy affectionately—"I am glad to have you with me again, but I can't forget you are a rebel and a deserter!"

"I a deserter? You mishtake," said Carl. "I am a prisoner."

"You disobeyed me, Carl! I told you not to enlist. You did wrong."

"Now shust listen," said Carl, "and I vill tell you. I did right. Cause vy. You are alive and vell now, ain't you?"

Penn smilingly admitted the fact.

"And that is petter as being hung?"

"I am not so very certain of that, Carl!"

"Vell, I am certain for you. Hanging ish no goot. Hunderts of vellers that don't like rebels no more as you do, volunteer rather than to be hung. Shows their goot sense."

"But you have taken an oath—you are under a solemn engagement, Carl, to fight against the government."

"You mishtake vunce more — two times. I make a pargain. I say to that man, 'You let Mishter Hapgoot go free, and not let him be hurt, and I vill be a rebel.' Vell, he agrees. But he don't keep his vord. He lets 'em go for to hang you vunce more. Now, if he preaks his part of the pargain, vy shouldn't I preak mine?"

"Well, Carl," said Penn, laughing, while his eyes glistened, "I trust thy conscience is clear in the matter."

"Hello!" cried Carl, jumping up from the bank on which they were seated. "Guns! They are at it again! I vill go see!"

The boy disappeared, scrambling down the dry bed of the torrent.

The firing continued at irregular intervals for half-an-hour. Carl did not return. Penn grew anxious. He stood intently listening, when he heard a noise behind him, and turning quickly, saw the glimmer of musket-barrels over the rocks.

"Fire!" said a voice.

And Penn threw himself down under the bank just in time to avoid the discharge of half-a-dozen pieces aimed at his head.

"What is the trouble?" asked the old man, who was lying on some blankets spread for him there in the shade.

Before Penn could reply, Silas Ropes and six men came rushing down upon them. Stackridge had been out-generalled. Whilst he and his men were being diverted by a feigned attack in front, two different parties had been despatched by circuitous routes to get in his rear. In executing the part of the plan intrusted to him, Ropes had unexpectedly come upon the schoolmaster and his companion. A minute later both were seized and dragged up from the bed of the torrent.

"Ye don't escape me this time!" said Silas with brutal exultation. "Tie him up to the tree thar; serve the old one the same. We can't be bothered with prisoners."

"What are you going to do with that helpless, blind old man?" cried Penn. "Do what you please with me; I expect no mercy—I ask none. But, I entreat you, respect his grey hair!"

The appeal seemed to have some effect even on the savage-hearted Silas. He glanced at his men: they were evidently of opinion that the slaughter of the old clergyman was uncalled for.

"Wal, tie the old ranter, and leave him. Quick work, boys. Got the schoolmaster fast?"

"All right," said the men.

"Wal, now stand back here, and le's have a little bayonet practice."

Penn knew very well what that meant. His clothes were stripped from him, in order to present a fair mark for the murderous steel; and he was bound to a tree.

"One at a time," said Silas. "Try your hand, Griffin. *Charge—bayonet!*"

In vain the old minister endeavoured to make himself heard in his friend's behalf. He could only pray for him.

Penn saw the ferocious soldier springing towards him, the deadly bayonet thrust straight at his heart. In an instant the murder would have been done. But when within two paces of his victim, the steel almost touching his breast, Griffin uttered a yell, dropped his gun, flung up his hands, and fell dead at Penn's feet. At the same moment a light curl of smoke was wafted from the heaped boulders in the chasm above, and the echoes of a rifle-crack reverberated among the rocks.

The assassins were terror-struck. They looked all around; not a human being was in sight. Distant firing proclaimed that Stackridge and his men were still engaged. The death that struck down Griffin seemed to have fallen from heaven. They waited but a moment, then fled precipitately, leaving Penn still bound, but uninjured, with the dead rebel at his feet. Then two figures came gliding swiftly down over the rocks. Penn uttered a cry of joy. Pomp and Cudjo!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEAD REBEL'S MUSKET.

POMP came reloading his rifle, while Cudjo, knife in hand, flew at the cords that confined the schoolmaster.

In his gratitude to Heaven and his deliverers, Penn could have hugged that grotesque, half-savage creature to his heart. But no time was to be lost. Snatching the knife, he hastened to release the bewildered clergyman.

"Pomp, my noble fellow!"—Penn wrung his hand—"you have twice saved my life—now let me ask one more favour of you! Take Mr. Villars to your cave—do for him what you have done for me."

"And you?" said Pomp quietly.

"I will take my chance with the others." And Penn in few words explained the occurrences of the night and morning.

Pomp shrugged his shoulders frowningly. The time was at hand when he and Cudjo could no longer enjoy in freedom their wild mountain life; even they must soon be drawn into the struggle.

"Cudjo! shall we take this old man to our den?"

"No, no! Don't ye take nobody dar! on'y Massa Hapgood."

"But he is blind!" said Penn.

"Others will come after who are not blind," said Pomp.

"My friends," interposed the old clergyman mildly, "do nothing for me that will bring danger to yourselves, I entreat you!"

These unselfish words, spoken with serious and benignant aspect, touched the generous chords in Pomp's breast.

"Here, Cudjo! help get this horse up—we can find a path for him."

Reluctantly Cudjo obeyed, and almost by main strength the two athletic blacks lifted and pulled the animal up the bank and out of the chasm.

Penn assisted his old friend to remount, then took leave of him.

"I will be with you again soon," he cried hopefully, as the negroes urged the horse forward into the thickets.

Then the young Quaker, left alone, turned to look at the dead rebel. For a moment horrible nausea and faintness made him lean against the tree for support. It was the first violent death of which he had ever been an eye-witness. He had known this man—who was indeed the same Griffin who had assisted the unwilling Pepperill to bring the tar-kettle to the wood-side on a certain memorable evening; ignorant, intemperate, too proud to work in a region where slavery made industry a disgrace, and

yet a fierce champion of the system which was his greatest curse. Now there he lay, in his dirt, and rags, and blood, his neck shot through, the same expression of ferocious hate with which he had rushed to bayonet the schoolmaster still distorting his visage—an object of horror and loathing. Was it not assuming a terrible responsibility to send this rampant sinner to his long account? Yet the choice was between Griffin's life and Penn's, and had not Pomp done well? But Penn could not help feeling remorse and commiseration for the wretch.

"Poor Griffin! I have no murderous hatred for such as you! But if you come in the way of my country's safety, or of the welfare of my friends, you must take the penalty!"

He picked up the musket that had fallen at his feet where he stood bound. Then, stifling his disgust, he felt in the dead man's pockets for ammunition. Cartridges there were none; but in their place he found some bullets and a powder-flask. Then putting in practice the lessons he had learned of Pomp when they hunted together on the mountain, he loaded the gun, resolutely setting his teeth and drawing his breath hard when he thought of the different kind of game it might now be his duty to shoot.

While thus occupied he heard footsteps that gave him a sudden start. He turned quickly, catching up the gun. To his immense relief he saw Pomp approaching with a smile.

"I thought you were with Mr. Villars!"

"Cudjo has gone with him. I am going with you."

"Oh, Pomp!" cried Penn, with a joyful sense of reliance upon his powerful and sagacious black friend. "But is Mr. Villars safe?"

"Cudjo is faithful," said Pomp. "He believes the old man is your friend, and a friend of the slave. Besides, I promised, if he would take him to the cave, that my next shot, if I have a chance, should be at his old acquaintance, Sile Ropes."

Pomp took the lead, guiding Penn through hollows and among thickets to a ledge crowned with shrubs of savin, whose summit commanded a view of all that mountain-side.

They crept among the bushes to the edge of the cliff. There they paused. Neither friend nor foe was in sight. No sound of fire-arms was heard—only the birds were singing.

Penn never forgot that scene. How fresh, and beautiful, and still the morning was! The sunlight flushed the craggy and wooded slopes. Far off, dim with early mist, lay the lovely hills and valleys of East Tennessee. On the north the peaks of the mountain range soared away, purple, rosy, glorious, in soft suffusing light. In the south-west other peaks receded,

billowy and blue. And God's pure deep sky was over all. Touched by the divine beauty of the day, Penn lay thinking with shame of the scenes of human folly and violence with which it had been desecrated, when the negro drew him softly by the sleeve.

"Look yonder! down in the edge of that little grove!"

Peering through an opening in the savins through which Pomp had thrust his rifle, Penn saw, stealing cautiously out of the grove, a man.

"It is Stackridge! He is reconnoitring."

"It is a retreat," said Pomp. "See, there they all come!"

"Carl with the rest, showing them the way!" added Penn.

He was watching with intense interest the movements of his friends, and rejoicing that no foe was in sight, when sudddenly Pomp uttered a warning whisper.

"Where? what?" said Penn, eagerly looking in the direction in which the negro pointed.

Down at their left was a long line of dark thickets which marked the edge of a ravine, out of which he now saw emerging, one by one, a file of armed men. They climbed up a narrow and difficult pass, and halted on the skirts of the thicket. Ten—twelve—fifteen, Penn counted. It was the other party that had been sent out simultaneously with that under Lieutenant Ropes, to get in the rear of the fugitives. And they had succeeded. Only a bushy ridge concealed them from Stackridge's men, who were coming up under the shelter of the same ridge on the other side.

Penn trembled with excitement as he saw the rebels cross swiftly forward, skulking among the bushes, to the summit of the ridge. The negro's eyes blazed, but he was perfectly cool. On one knee, his left foot advanced—holding his rifle with one hand, and parting the bushes with the other—he smiled as he observed the situation.

"Here," said he to Penn, "rest your gun in this little crotch. Now, can you see to take aim?"

"Yes," said Penn with his heart in his throat.

"Calm your nerves! Everything depends on our first shot. Wait till I give the word. See! they have discovered Stackridge!"

"We might shout and warn him," said Penn, whose nature still shrank from using any more deadly means of saving his friends.

"And so discover ourselves! That 'll never do. Have you sighted your man?"

"Yes—the one lying on his belly behind that cedar."

"Very well! I'll take the fellow next him. The moment you have fired, keep perfectly still, only draw your gun back and load. Now—fire!"

Just then Stackridge and his men, in full view of their hidden friends

on the ledge, were appearing to the fifteen ambushed rebels also. Suddenly the loud bang of a musket, followed instantly by the sharp crack of a rifle, echoed down the mountain side. The rebel behind the cedar sprang to his feet, dropping his gun, and throwing up his hands, and rushed back down the ridge, screaming, "I'm hit! I'm hit!" while the man next him also attempted to rise, but fell again, Pomp having discreetly aimed at an exposed leg.

"I'm glad we've only wounded them!" whispered Penn, very pale, his lips compressed, his eyes gleaming.

"It has the effect!" said Pomp. "Your friends have discovered the ambush, thanks to that coward's uproar, and now the rascals are panic-struck! Fire again as they go into the ravine—powder alone will do now—a little noise will send them tumbling!"

They accordingly fired blank discharges; at the same time Stackridge and his friends, recovering from their momentary astonishment, charged after the retreating rebels, who had barely time to carry off their wounded and escape into the ravine, when their pursuers scaled the ridge.

"I'm off!" said Pomp, creeping back through the savins. "These men are not my friends, though they are yours. I'll go and look after Cudjo." And bounding down into a hollow, he was quickly out of sight.

CHAPTER XXV.

BLACK AND WHITE.

PENN attached his handkerchief to the end of the musket, and, standing upon the ledge, waved it over the bushes. Carl, recognising him, was the first to scramble up the height. The whole party followed, each sturdy patriot wringing the schoolmaster's hand with hearty congratulations when they learned what use he had made of the rebel musket.

"But the whole credit of the manœuvre belongs not to me, but to the negro Pomp." And he related the story of his own rescue and theirs.

The patriots looked grave.

"Where is the fellow?" asked Stackridge.

"Being a fugitive slave, he feared lest he should find little favour in the eyes of his master's neighbours," said Penn.

"That's where he was right," said Deslow, with a bigoted and unforgiving expression. "Nothing under the sun shall make me give encouragement to a nigger's running away."

Two or three others nodded grim assent to this first principle of the slaveholder's discipline. Penn was fired with exasperation and scorn, and

would have separated himself from these narrow-minded patriots on the spot, had not Stackridge jumped up from the ground upon which he had thrown himself, and, striking his gun-barrel fiercely, exclaimed—

"Now, that's what I call cursed foolishness, Deslow, and every man that holds to that way of thinking had better go over to t'other side to oncet! If we can't make up our minds to sacrifice our property, and, what's more to some folks, our prejudices, in the cause we're fighting for, we may as well stop before we stir a step further. I'm a slaveholder, and always have been, but I swear I can't say as I ever felt it was such a divine institution as some try to make it out, and I don't believe there's a man here that thinks in his heart that it's just right. And as for the niggers running away, my private sentiment is, that I don't blame 'em a mite. You or I, Deslow, would run in their place—you know you would." And Stackridge wiped his brow savagely.

"And as for this particular case," said Captain Grudd, with a gleam of light in his lean and swarthy countenance, "don't le's be blind to our own interests—don't le's be downright fools. I've said from the first that slavery and rebellion was brother and sister—they go together—and I've made up my mind to stand by my country and the old flag, whatever comes of the institution." All except the conservative Deslow applauded this resolution. "Then consider," added the captain, his deliberate, impressive manner proving quite as effective as Stackridge's more excited and fiery style; "here we are fighting for our very lives and liberties, and if, as I say, slavery's the cause of this war, then we're fighting against slavery, the best we can fix it. How monstrous absurd 'twill be, then, for us to refuse the assistance of any nigger that has it to give! Bythewood, Pomp's owner, is one of the hottest secessionists I know, and d'ye think I want Pomp sent back to him, to help that side, when he has shown that he can be of such mighty good service to us? I move that we send the professor to make a treaty with him. What do you say, Mr. Hapgood?"

"I say," replied Penn with enthusiasm, "that he and Cudjo are in a condition to do infinitely more for us than we can do for them, and if their alliance can be secured, I say that we ought by all means to secure it."

"That depends," said Grudd, "upon what we intend to do. Are we going to make a stand here, and see if the loyal part of old Tennessee will rise up and sustain us? or are we going to fight our way over the mountains, and never come back till a Union army comes with us to set things a little to rights here?"

"Wa'al," said Withers, who concealed a hardy courage and earnest patriotism under a phlegmatic and droll exterior, "while we're discussin'

that question I reckon we may as well have breakfast. This is as good a place as any; we can take turns keeping a look-out from that ledge."

He proceeded to kindle a fire in the hollow. The fugitives, in passing a field of corn, had thrust into their pockets a plentiful supply of green ears, which they now husked and roasted. There was a spring in the rocks near by, from which they drank lying on their faces, and dipping in their beards. This was their breakfast, during which Penn's mission to the blacks was fully discussed, and finally decided upon.

The meal concluded, the refugees resumed their march, and entered an immense thick wood farther up the mountain. In a cool and shadowy spot they halted once more, and here Penn took leave of them, setting out on his visit to the cave.

He had a mile to travel over a rough, wild region, where the fires that had formerly devastated it had left the only visible marks of a near civilisation. In a tranquil little dell that had grown up to wild grass he came suddenly upon a horse feeding. It was Stackridge's useful nag, which looked up from his lofty grove-shaded pasture with a low whinny of recognition as Penn patted his neck and passed along.

A furlong or two farther on the well-known ravine opened—dark, silent, profound, with its shaggy sides, one in shadow and the other in the sun, and its little embowered brook trickling far down there amid mossy stones—as lonesome, wild, and solitary as if no human eye had ever beheld it before.

Penn glided over the ledges, and descended along the narrow shelf of rock, behind the thickets that screened the entrance to the cave. Sunlight, and mountain wind, and summer heat he left behind, and entered the cool, still, gloomy abode.

Cudjo ran to the mouth of the cave to meet him.

"Lef me frow dis yer blanket ober your shoulders while ye cool off; cotch yer de'f cold if ye don't. De ol' man's a 'speckin' ye."

Penn was relieved to learn that Mr. Villars had arrived in safety, and gratified to find him lying comfortably on the bed conversing with Pomp.

"By the blessing of God, I am very well indeed, my dear Penn. Have you had any more trouble since Pomp left you?"

"No," said Penn, "thanks to him. Pomp, our friends want to see you and thank you, and they have sent me to bring you to them."

The negro merely shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"What good der tanks do to we?" cried Cudjo. "Ain't one ob dem ar men but would been glad to hab us cotched and licked for runnin' away, fur de 'xample to de tudder niggers."

"If that was true of them once, it is not now," said Penn. "Yet,

Pomp, if you feel that there is the least danger in going to them, do not go."

"Danger?" The negro's proud and lofty look showed what he thought of that. "Cudjo, make Mr. Hapgood a cup of coffee; he looks tired. You have had a hard time, I reckon, since you left us."

"Him stay wid us now till he chirk up again," said Cudjo, running to his coffee-box—"him and de ol' gemman stay—nobody else."

While the coffee was making, Penn, sitting on one of the stone blocks which he had named giant's stools, repeated such parts of the late breakfast talk of Stackridge and his friends as he thought would interest Pomp and win his confidence. Then he drank the strong black beverage in silence, leaving the negro to his own reflections.

"Are you going again?" said Pomp.

"Yes, I promised them I would return."

"Take some coffee and a kettle to boil it in; they will be glad of it, I should think."

"Pomp, you know how to do good even to your enemies. What shall I say to them for you?"

"What I have to say to them I will say myself," said Pomp, taking his rifle in one hand and the kettle in the other, to Cudjo's great wrath and disgust.

He set out with Penn immediately. They found the men resting about the roots of the forest trees, on the banks of a stream that came gurgling and plashing down the mountain side. Above them spread the beautiful green tops of maples, tinted with sunshine, and softly rustling in the breeze. The curving banks formed here a little natural amphitheatre, carpeted with moss and old leaves, on which they sat or lay, with their hats off and their guns at their sides.

A sentry posted on the edge of the forest brought in Penn and his companion. There was a stir of interest among the patriots, and some of them rose to their feet. Stackridge, Grudd, and two or three others cordially offered the negro their hands, and pledged him their gratitude and friendship. Pomp accepted these tokens of esteem in silence.

Penn took the kettle, and proceeded, with Carl's help, to make a fire and prepare coffee for the company, intently listening the while to all that was said.

Jutting from one bank of the stream, which washed its base, was a huge square block covered with dark green moss. Upon this Pomp stepped, and rested his rifle upon it, and bared his massive head, and stood facing his auditors with a placid smile, under the canopy of leaves. There was not among them all so noble a figure of a man as he who stood upon

the rock, and he seemed to have chosen his somewhat theatrical attitude in order to illustrate, by his imposing presence, the words that rose to his lips.

"You will excuse me, gentlemen, if I cannot forget that I am talking with those who buy and sell men like me!"

"No, no, Pomp," cried Stackridge, "not men like you—there are few like you anywhere."

"I wish there was more like him, and that I owned a good gang of 'em!" muttered the man Deslow.

"I don't," replied Withers, with a drawl which had a deep meaning in it; "'twould be too much like sleeping on a row of powder-barrels, with lighted candles stuck in the bungholes. Dangerous them big knowin' niggers be."

"You buy and sell men, and women, and children of my race. If I am not like them, it is because circumstances have lifted me out of the wretched condition in which it is your constant policy and endeavour to keep us. By your laws—the laws you make and uphold—I am this day claimed as a slave; by your laws I am hunted as a slave—yes, some of you here have joined your neighbour in the hunt for me, as if I was no more than a wild beast to be hounded and shot down if I could not be caught. Now tell me what union or concord there can be between you and me!"

"I own," said Deslow—for Pomp's gleaming eyes had darted significant lightnings at him—"I did once come up here with Bythewood to see if we could find you. Not that I had anything against you, Pomp—not a thing; and as for your quarrel with your master, I ain't sure but you had the right on't, but you know as well as we do that we can't countenance a nigger's running away under any circumstances."

"No!" said Pomp, with sparkling sarcasm. "Your secessionist neighbours revolt against the mildest government in the world, and resort to bloodshed on account of some fancied wrongs. You revolt against them because you prefer your own government to theirs. Your forefathers went to war with the mother country on account of a few taxes. But a negro must not revolt, he must not even attempt to run away, although he feels the relentless heel of oppression grinding into the dust all his rights, all that is dear to him, all that he loves! A white man may take up arms to defend a bit of property, but a black man has no right to defend either his wife, or his child, or his liberty, or even his own life, against his master!"

Only the narrow-minded Deslow had the confidence to meet this stunning argument, enforced as it was by the speaker's powerful manner.

"You know, Pomp, that your condition, to begin with, is very different from that of any white man. Your relation to your master is not that of

a man to his neighbour, or of a citizen to the government, it is that of property to its owner."

"Property!" There was something almost wicked in the wild, bright glance with which the negro repeated this word. "How came we property, sir?"

"Our laws make you so, and you have been acquired as property," said Deslow, not unkindly, but in his bigoted, obstinate way. "So, really, Pomp, you can't blame us for the view we take of it, though it does conflict a little with your choice in the matter."

"But suppose I can show you that you are wrong, and that even by your own laws we are not, and cannot be, property?" said Pomp. "I will admit your title to a lot of land you may purchase or reclaim from nature, or to an animal you have captured, or bought, or raised. But a man's natural, original owner is—himself. Now, I never sold myself. My father never sold himself. My father was stolen by pirates on the coast of Africa, and brought to this country and sold. The man who bought him bought what had been stolen. By your own laws you cannot hold stolen property. My father was stolen property, if he was property at all. It was so with my mother. It is so with me. It is the same with every black man on this continent. Not one ever sold himself, or can be sold, or can be owned. For to say that what a man steals or takes by force is his, to dispose of as he chooses, is to go back to barbarism. So much," added Pomp, "for the claim of PROPERTY!"

Penn was so delighted with this triumphant declaration of principles that he could have flung his hat into the maple boughs and shouted "Bravo!" He deemed it discreet, however, to confine the expression of his enthusiasm to a tight grasp on Carl's sympathetic hand, and to watch the effect of the speech on the rest.

"Deslow," laughed Stackridge, himself not ill-pleased with Pomp's arguments, "what do you say to that?"

"Wal," said Deslow, "I never thought on't in just that light before, and I own he makes out a pooty good show of a case. But yet——" He hesitated, scratching for an idea among the stiff black hair that grew on his low wrinkled forehead.

"But yet, but yet, but yet!" said Pomp ironically. "It's so hard, when our selfish interests are at stake, to confess our injustice or give up a bad cause! But I did not come here to argue my right to my own manhood. I take it without arguing. Neither did I come to ask anything for myself. You can do nothing for me but get me into trouble. Yet I believe in the cause in which you have taken up arms. I have served you this morning without being asked by you to do it, and I may assist you again

when the time comes. In the meanwhile, if you want anything that I have it is yours, for I recognise that we are brothers, though you do not. But I will not join you, for I am neither slave nor inferior, and I have no wish to be acknowledged an equal."

"I, for one," said the impulsive Stackridge, again grasping his hand, "honour the position you take. What I wanted was to thank you for what you have done, and to promise that you are safe from danger as far as regards us. I'm glad you've got your liberty. I hope you will keep it. You deserve it. Every slave deserves the same that has the manliness to strike a blow for the good old government——"

"That has kept him a slave," added Pomp with a bitter smile.

"Yes; and so much the more noble in him to fight for it!" said Stackridge. "Now, if you don't want to let us into the secrets of your way of life, I can't say I blame ye. We're glad to get the coffee; and if you've any game or potatoes on hand, that you can spare, we'll take 'em, and pay ye when we have a chance to forage for ourselves, which won't be long first."

"I have some salted bear's meat that you'll be welcome to; and maybe Cudjo can spare a little meal." His eye rested on Carl, whose fidelity he knew. "Let that boy come with us! We will send the provisions by him."

Carl was delighted with the honour, for Penn was likewise going back to Mr. Villars with the negro.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHY AUGUSTUS DID NOT PROPOSE.

THE valiant Confederates, returning from the pursuit of the escaped prisoners, proved themselves possessed of at least one important qualification for serving the rebel cause. They were able to give a marvellously good account of themselves. Whatever the military authorities may have thought of it, the people believed that the little band of Union men had been nearly annihilated.

In the midst of the excitement, Mr. Augustus Bythewood returned home, and went in the evening to call upon, counsel, and console the daughters of the old man Villars.

"Oh, Massa Bythewood!" cried Toby, in great joy at sight of him, "dey been killin' ol' massa up on de mountain; and de young ladies—oh, Massa Bythewood! ye must do sumfin' for de young ladies and ol' massa!"

Mr. Augustus flattered himself that he had arrived at just the right time.

"My dear Virginia! you cannot conceive of my astonishment and grief on hearing what has happened to your family! I have but just this hour returned to town, or I should have hastened before to assure you that all I can do for you I will most gladly undertake."

Thus the amiable, the chivalrous, the friendly Gus overflowed with eloquent sympathy and protestation, appearing, in short, the very courteous, noble, and devoted gentleman he wasn't.

Virginia breathed hard, compressed her lips, white with indignation as well as with suffering, and let him act his part. And the confident lover did not dream that those eyes, red with grief and surrounded by dark circles, saw through all his hypocritical professions, or that the cold, passive little hand, abandoned through the apathy of despair to his caresses, would have been thrust into the fire before ever he would have been allowed to win it.

"Surely," she managed to say in a voice scarce above a whisper, "if ever we needed a true, disinterested friend, it is now. Sit down, and be so kind as to excuse me a moment. I will call my sister."

So she withdrew. And Augustus smiled. "Now is my time!" he said complacently to himself, resolved to make an offer of that valuable hand of his that very night; forlorn, friendless, wretched, was it possible that she could refuse such a prize? So he sat, and fondled his curls, and practised sweet smiles, and sympathised with Salina when she came, and waited for Virginia—little knowing what was to happen to her, and to him, and to all, before ever he saw that vanished face again.

For Virginia had business on her hands that night. She remembered the hurried directions Penn had given for communicating with her father, and she was already preparing to send off Toby to the round rock.

"Gracious, missis!" said the old negro, returning hastily to the kitchen door where she stood watching his departure, "dar's a man out dar, a-waitin'! Did ye see him, missis?"

She had indeed seen a human figure advance in the darkness, as if with intent to intercept or follow him. Perplexed and indignant at the discovery, she suffered the old servant to return into the house, and remained herself to see what became of the figure. It moved off a little way in the darkness, and disappeared.

"Wha' sh'll we do?" Toby rolled up his eyes in consternation. "Do jes' speak to Mr. Bythewood, Miss Jinny, he's de bestist friend—he'll tell what to do."

"No, no, Toby!" said Virginia, collecting herself, and speaking with decision. "He is the last person I would consult. Toby, you must try again; for either you or I must be at the rock before ten o'clock."

"You, Miss Jinny? Who eber heern o' sich a ting!"

"Go yourself, then, good Toby!" And she earnestly reminded him of the necessity.

"Oh, yes, yes! I'll go! Massa can't lib widout ol' Toby, dat's a fac'!"

But looking out again in the dark, his zeal was suddenly damped. "Dey cotch me, dey sarve me wus'n dey sarved ol' Pete, shore! Can't help tinkin' ob dat!"

Virginia saw what serious cause there was to dread such a catastrophe. But her resolution was unshaken.

"Toby, listen. That man out there is a spy. His object is to see if any of our friends come to the house, or if we send to them. He won't molest you, but he may follow you to see where you go. If he does, then make a wide circuit, and return home, and I will find some other means of communication."

Thus encouraged, the negro set out a second time. Virginia followed him at a distance. She saw, as she anticipated, the figure start up again, and move off in the direction he was going. Toby accordingly commenced making a large detour through the fields, and both he and the shadow dogging him were soon out of sight.

Then Virginia lost no time in executing the other plan at which she had hinted. Instead of returning, to give up the undertaking in despair, and listen to matrimonial proposals from Gus Bythewood, she took a long breath, gathered up her skirts, and set out for the mountain.

There was a new moon, but it was hidden by clouds. Still the evening was not very dark. The long twilight of the summer day still lingered in the valley. Here and there she could distinguish landmarks—a knoll, a rock, or a tree—which gave her confidence. I will not say that she feared nothing. She was by nature timid, imaginative, and she feared many things. Her own footsteps were a terror to her. The moving of a bush in the wind, the starting of a rabbit from her path, caused her flesh to thrill. At sight of an object slowly and noiselessly emerging from the darkness and standing before her, motionless and spectral, she almost fainted, until she discovered that it was an old acquaintance, a tall pine stump. But all these childish terrors she resolutely overcame. Her heart never faltered in its purpose. Affection for her father, anxiety for his welfare, and, it may be, some little solicitude for her father's friend, who had appointed the tryst at the rock—not with herself, indeed, but with Toby—kept her firm and unwavering in her course. And beneath all, deep in her soul, was a strong religious sense, a faith in a Divine guidance and protection.

What most she feared was neither ghost nor wild beast of the mountains. She felt that, if she could avoid encountering the brutal soldiers of secession, keeping watch along the mountain-side, she would willingly risk everything else. With the utmost caution, with breathless tread, she drew near the road she was to cross. Her footsteps were less loud than her heart-beats. Dogs barked in the distance. In a pool near by, some happy frogs were singing. No other sounds; she waited and listened long, then glided across the road.

She had come far from the village in order to avoid meeting any one. Her course now lay directly up the mountain-side. The round rock was a famous boulder known to picnic parties that frequented the spot in summer to enjoy a view from its summit, and a luncheon under its shadow. She had been there a dozen times; but could she find it in the night? In vain, as she toiled upwards, she strained her eyes to see the huge dim stone jutting out from the shadowy rocks and bushes.

At length a sudden light, faint and silvery, streamed down upon her. She looked and saw the clouds parted, and below them the crescent moon setting, like a cimeter of white flame withdrawn by an invisible hand behind the vast shadowy summit of the mountain. Almost at the same moment she discovered the object she sought. The rock was close before her, and close upon her right was the grove which she herself had so often helped to fill with singing and laughter.

She remembered—indeed, had she not remembered all the way?—that the last time she visited the spot it was in company with Penn. Now she had come to meet him again—how unmaidenly the act! Strong, however, in her own conscious purity of heart, strong also in her confidence in him, she put behind her every unworthy thought, and sought the shelter of the rock.

And there, after all her labours and fears, scratches in her flesh and rents in her clothes—there she was alone. Penn had not come. Perhaps he would not come. It was by this time ten o'clock. What should she do? Remain, hoping that he would yet fulfil his promise? or return the way she came, unsatisfied, disheartened, weary, her heart and strength sustained by no word of comfort from him, by no tidings from her father?

She waited. It was not long before her eager ear caught the sound of footsteps. An active figure was coming along the edge of the grove. How joyously her heart bounded! In order that Penn might not be too suddenly surprised at finding her in Toby's place, she stepped out from the shadow of the boulder, and advanced to meet him. She shrank back again as suddenly, fear curdling her blood.

The comer was not Penn. He wore the Confederate uniform: this was

what terrified her. She crouched down under the rock; but perceiving that the man did not pass by—that he walked straight up to her—she started forth again, in the vain hope to escape by flight. Almost at the first step she tripped and fell, and the hand of the Confederate soldier was on her arm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MEN WITH THE DARK LANTERN.

THE moon had now set, and it was dark. The frightened girl could not distinguish the features of him who bent over her; but through the trance of horror that was upon her, she recognised a voice.

"Virginie! I tought it vas you! Don't you know me, Virginie?"

No voice before had ever brought such joy to her soul.

"O Carl! why didn't I know you?"

"Vy not? Pecause maybe you vas looking for somepody else. Mishter Hapgoot came part vay mit me, but he vas so used up I made him shtop till I came to pring Toby up vere he is."

Then Virginia, recovering from her agitation, had a score of questions to ask about her father, about the fight, and about Penn.

"If you vill only go up, he vill tell you so much more as I can. Then you vill go and see your fahder. That vill be petter as going back to-night, vere there is no good shtout fellow in the house to prevail on them villains to keep their dishtance."

Even at the outset of her adventurous journey Virginia had felt a vague hope that she should visit her father before she returned. What the boy said inspired her with courage to proceed. She would go up as far as where Penn was waiting, at all events: then she would be guided by his advice.

The two set out, Carl leading her by the hand, and assisting her. It grew darker and darker. The stars were hidden: the sky was almost completely overcast by black clouds. Slowly and with great difficulty they made their way among trees and bushes, through abrupt hollows and over rocks. Virginia felt that she could have done nothing without Carl; and the thought of returning alone, in such darkness, down the mountain, made her shudder.

But at length even Carl began to sweat with something besides the physical exertion required in making the ascent. His mind had grown exceedingly perturbed, and Virginia perceived that his course was wavering and uncertain.

He stopped, blowing and wiping his face.

"Dish ish de all confoundedesht, meanesht, mosht dishgusting road for a dark night the prince of darkness himself ever invented!" he exclaimed, speaking unusually thick in his heat and excitement. "I shouldn't be very much surprised if I was a little out of the right vay. You shtay right here till I look."

She sat down and waited. Intense darkness surrounded her; not a star was visible; she could not see her own hand. For a little while Carl's footsteps could be heard feeling for more familiar ground; and then occasionally the crackling of a dry twig, as he trod upon it, showed that he was not far off. Then he whistled; then he softly called "Hello!" in the woods; moving all the time farther and farther away.

Carl believed that Penn could not be far distant, and, in order to get an answering signal, he kept whistling and calling louder and louder. At length came a response—a low warning whistle. So he plodded on, and had nearly reached the spot where he was confident Penn was searching for him, when there came a rush of feet, and he was suddenly and violently seized by invisible assailants.

"Got him!"

"Yes! all right!"

"Hang on to him! It's the Dutchman, ain't it? I thought I knew the brogue!"

The last speaker was Lieutenant Silas Ropes, and Carl perceived that he had fallen into the hands of a squad of Confederate soldiers. That he was vastly astonished and altogether disconcerted at first we may well suppose. But Carl was not a lad to remain long bereft of his wits when they were so necessary to him.

"Ho! vot for you choke a fellow so?" he indignantly demanded. "I vas treated petter as that ven I vas a prisoner."

"What do you mean, you d—d deserter?"

"Haven't I just got avay from Stackridge? and vasn't I running to find you as vast as ever a vellow could? And now you call me a deserter!" retorted Carl, aggrieved.

"Running to find *us!*"

"To be sure! Didn't I say, 'Is it you?' For they said you vas on the mountain. Though I did not think I should find you so easy!" which was indeed the truth.

Carl persisted so earnestly in regarding the affair from this point of view, that his captors began to think it worth while to question him.

"Vun of them vellows just says to me, he says, 'Shpeak vun vord, or make vun noise, and I vill plow your prains out!' I vasn't very much in

favour to have my prains plowed out, so I complied mit his very urgent request. That's the vay they took me prisoner."

"Wal," remarked Silas, "what he says may be true, but I don't believe nary word on't. Got his hands tied? Now lock arms with him, and bring him along."

Carl was in despair at this mode of treatment, for it rendered escape impossible—and what would become of Virginia? His anxiety for her safety became absolute terror when he discovered the errand on which these men were bound.

By the light of a dark lantern they led him through the grove, across a brook that came tumbling down out of a wild black gorge, and up the mountain slope into the edge of the great forest above. Here they stopped.

"This yer's a good place, boys, to begin. Kick the leaves together. That's the talk."

They were in a leafy hollow of the dry woods. A blaze was soon kindled, which shot up in the darkness, and threw its ruddy glare upon the trunks and overhanging canopy of foliage, and upon the malignant, gleaming faces of the soldiers. Little effort was needed to insure the spreading of the flames. They ran over the ground, licking up the dry leaves, crackling the twigs, catching at the bark of trees, and filling the forest, late so silent and black, with their glow and roar.

"That's to smoke out your d—d Union friends!" said Silas to Carl, with a hideous grin.

Yes, Carl understood that well enough. In this same forest, on the banks of the brook above where it fell into the gorge, the patriots were encamped. And Virginia? Still believing that the worst that could happen to her would be to fall into the hands of these ruffians, the lad sweated in silent agony over the secret he was bound to keep.

"What makes ye look so down-in-the-mouth, Dutchy? 'Fraid your friends will get scorched?"

"I vas thinking the fire vill be apt to scorch us as much as it vill them. And I have my hands tied so I can't run."

"Don't be afraid; we'll look out for you. I swear, boys! the fire looks as though 'twas dying down! Get out of this yer holler and there ain't no leaves to feed it; and I be hanged if the wind ain't gitting contrary!"

Carl witnessed these effects with a gleam of hope. The soldiers fell to gathering bark and sticks, which they piled at the roots of trees. The lad was left almost alone. Had his hands been free he would have run. A soldier passed near him, dragging a dead bush.

"Dan Pepperill! cut the cord!" Dan shook his head with a look of terror. "Drop your knife, then!"

"O Lord!" said Dan. "They'd hang me! I be durned if they wouldn't!"

"Dan, you must! I don't care vun cent for myself. But Virginie Villars—she is just beyond vere you took me. Vill you leave her to die? And Mishter Hapgoot is just a little vay up the mountain, and there is nopody to let him know!"

A look of ghastly intelligence came into Dan's face as he stopped to listen to this explanation. He seemed half inclined to set the boy's limbs free, and risk the consequences. But just then Ropes shouted at him—

"What ye at thar, Pepperill? Why don't ye bring along that ar bush?"

So the brief conference ended, and the cords remained uncut. And a great, dangerous fire was kindling in the woods. And now Carl's only hope for Virginia was that she would take advantage of its light to make good her retreat from the mountain.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

UNFORTUNATELY the poor girl had no suspicion of the mischance that had overtaken her guide. She heard voices, and believed that he had fallen in with some friends. Thus she waited, expecting momentarily that he would return to her. She saw a single gleam of light that vanished in the darkness. Then the voices grew fainter and fainter, and at length died in the distance. And she was once more utterly alone.

Fearful doubt and uncertainty agitated her. In a moment of despair, yielding to the terrors of her situation, she wrung her hands and called on Carl imploringly not to abandon her, but to come back—"Oh, dear, dear Carl, come back!"

Suddenly she checked herself. Why was she sitting there, wasting the time in tears and reproaches?

"Poor Carl never meant to desert me in this way, I know. If I ever see him again he will make me sorry that I have blamed him. No doubt he has done his best. But, whatever has become of him, I am sure he cannot find his way back to me now. I'll follow him; perhaps I may find him, or Penn, or some of their friends."

She arose accordingly, and groped her way in the direction in which she had seen the light and heard the voices. And soon another and very

different light gladdened her eyes—a faint glow, far off, as of a fire kindled among the forest trees. It was the camp of the patriots, she thought.

She came to the brook, which, invisible, mysterious, murmuring, rolled along in the midnight blackness, and seemed too formidable for her to ford. She felt the cold rush of the hurrying water, the slippery slime of the mossy and treacherous stones, and withdrew her appalled hands. To find a shallow place to cross, she followed up the bank; and as the light was still before her, higher on the mountain, she kept on groping among trees, climbing over logs and rocks, falling often, but always resolutely rising again, until, to her dismay, the glow began to disappear. She had, without knowing it, followed the stream up into the deep gorge through which it poured; and now the precipitous wood-crowned wall, rising beside her, overhanging her, shut out the last glimpse of the fire.

She was by this time exceedingly fatigued. It seemed useless to advance farther; she felt certain that she was only getting deeper and deeper into the entangling difficulties of that unknown, horrible place. Neither had she the courage or strength to retrace her steps. Nothing then remained for her but to pass the remainder of the night where she was, and wait patiently for the morning.

Little knowing that the light she had seen was the glare of the kindled forest, she endeavoured to convince herself she had nothing to fear. At all events, she knew that trembling and tears could avail her nothing. She had not ventured to call very loudly for help, fearing lest her voice might bring foe instead of friend. And now it occurred to her that perhaps Carl had been taken by the soldiers: yes, it must be so: she explained it all to herself, and wondered why she had not thought of it before. It would, therefore, be folly in her now to scream for aid.

Comfortless, yet calm, she explored the ground for a resting-place. She cleared the twigs away from the roots of a tree, and laid herself down there on the moss and old leaves. Everything seemed dank with the never-failing dews of the deep and sheltered gorge; but she did not mind the dampness of her couch. A strong wind was rising, and the great trees above her swayed and moaned. She was vexed by mosquitoes that bit as if they then for the first time tasted blood, and never expected to taste it again; but she was too weary to care much for them either. She rested her arm on the mossy root; she rested her head on her arm; she drew her handkerchief over her face; she shut out from her soul all the miseries and dangers of her situation, and quietly said her prayers.

There is nothing that brings God's peace upon us so soon as when in silence and sweet trust we pray to Him. A delicious sense of repose ensued, and her thoughts floated off in dreams.

She dreamed she was flying with her father from the fury of armed men. She led him into a wilderness; and it was night; and great rocks rose up suddenly before them in the gloom, and awful chasms yawned. Then she was wandering alone; she had lost her father, and was seeking him up and down. Then it seemed that Penn was by her side; and when she asked for her father, he smilingly pointed upward at a wondrously beautiful light that shone from the summit of a hill. She sought to go up thither, but grew weary, and sat down to rest in a deep grove, with an ice-cold mountain stream dashing at her feet. Then the light on the hill became a lake of fire, and it poured its waves into the stream, and the stream flowed past her a roaring river of flame. Lightnings crackled in the air above her. Thunderbolts fell. The heat was intolerable. The river had overflowed and set the world on fire. And she could not fly, for terror chained her limbs. She struggled—screamed—awoke. She started up. Her dream was a reality.

Either the fire set by the soldiers had spread, driven by the wind over the dry leaves, into the grove below her, or else they had fired the grove itself on their retreat. Her eyes opened upon a vision of appalling brightness. For a moment she stood utterly dazzled and bewildered, not knowing where she was. Memory and reason were paralysed; she could not remember, she could not think: amazement and terror possessed her.

Instinctively shielding her eyes, she looked down. The ground where she had lain, the log, the sticks, the moss, and her handkerchief fallen upon it, were illumined with a glare brighter than noonday. At sight of the handkerchief came recollection. Her terrible adventure, the glow she had seen in the woods, her bed on the earth—she remembered everything. And now the actual perils of her position became apparent to her returning faculties.

Where all was blackness when she lay down, now all was preternatural light. Every bush and jutting rock of the wild overhanging cliffs stood out in fearful distinctness. The saplings and trees on their summits, fifty feet above her head, seemed huddling together, and leaning forward terror-stricken, in an atmosphere of whirling flame and smoke. Climb those cliffs she could not, though she were to die.

She must, then, flee farther up into the deep and narrow gorge, or endeavour to escape by the way she had come. But the way she had come was fire.

The fire already enveloped the mouth of the gorge, shutting her in. The trunks of near trees stood like the bars of a stupendous cage, through which she looked at the raging demons beyond. Burning limbs fell, shooting through the air with trails of flame. Every tree was a pillar of

fire. Here a bough, still untouched, hung, dark and impassive, against the lurid, surging chaos.

Virginia approached near enough to be impressed with the dreadful certainty that there was no outlet whatever, for any mortal foot, in that direction. Tortured by the heat, and pursued by lighted twigs, that fell like fiery darts around her, she fled back into the gorge.

The fire was still spreading rapidly. The timber along both sides of the gorge, at its opening, began to burn upwards towards the summits of the cliffs. Soon the very spot where she had slept, and where she now paused once more in her terrible perplexity and fear, would be an abyss of flame.

Again she took flight, hastening along the edge of the stream, up into the heart of the gorge. All the way she looked eagerly for some slant or cleft in the mountain walls where she might hope to ascend. But, wherever her eye ranged along the ledges above, she beheld them dizzy-steep and unscalable. And so she kept on until even the way before her was closed up.

On the brink of a rock-rimmed, flashing basin she stopped. Down into this, from a shelf twenty feet in height, fell the brook in a bright, fire-tinted cascade.

During the moment that she stood there, a great bird, like an owl, that had probably been driven from his hollow tree or fissure in the rocks by the fire, flapped past her face, almost touching her with his wings, and dashed blindly against the waterfall. He was swept down into the pool. After some violent fluttering and floundering in the water, he extricated himself, perched on a stone at its edge, shook out his wet feathers, and stared at her with large cat-like eyes, without fear.

On reaching the waterfall she had felt for a moment that all was over—that certain death awaited her. Then out of her very despair came a gleam of hope. She might creep under the cascade, or behind it, and that would protect her. But when she looked up, and saw, around and above her, the forest trees with the frightful and ever-increasing glow upon them, and knew that they too soon must kindle, and thought of firebrands rained down upon her, and falling columns of fire filling the gorge with burning wood—then her soul sickened: what protection would a little sheet of water prove against such furnace heat?

No: she must escape or perish. Beside the cascade there was a broken angle of the rocks, by which, if she could reach it, she might at least, she thought, climb to the upper part of the gorge. But the nearest foothold she could discover was ten feet above the basin, in sheer ascent. The ledge was dank and slippery with the dashing spray. Gain the top of it, however, she must. She ran up the embankment under the cliff.

Here a sapling gave her support; she clung to a crevice or projection there; a drooping bough saved her from falling when the soft earth slid from beneath her feet farther on. So she climbed along the side of the precipice, until the broken corner of the cliff was hardly two yards off before her. Yes, a secure foothold was there, and above it rose irregular pointed stairs, leading steeply to the top of the cascade. O to reach that shattered ledge! A space of perpendicular wall intervened. No shrub, no drooping bough, was there. Here was only a slight projection, just enough to rest the edge of a foot upon. She placed her foot upon it. She found a crevice above, and thrust her fingers into it as if there was no such thing as pain. She clung, she took a step—she was half-a-yard nearer the angle. But what next could she do? She was hanging in the air above the basin, into which the slightest slip would precipitate her. To change hands—relieve the one advanced and insert the fingers of the other in its place—was a perilous undertaking. But she did it. Then she reached forward again with hand and foot, found another spot to cling to, and took another step. She was thankful for the great light that lighted the rocks before her. Close by now was the fractured angle of the cliff: one more step, and she could set her foot upon the lowest. Her strength was almost gone; her hands, though insensible to pain, were conscious of slipping. To fall would be to lose all she had gained, and all the strength she had exhausted in the effort. Her feet now—or rather one of them—had a tolerably secure hold on the rib of the ledge. She made one last effort with her hands, and, just as she was falling, gave a spring. She knew that all was staked upon that one dizzy instant of time. But for that knowledge she could never have accomplished what she did. She fell fowards towards the angle, caught a point of the rock with her hands, and clung there until she had safely placed her feet.

This done, it was absolutely necessary to stop a moment to rest. She looked downwards and behind her, to see what she had done. The sight made her dizzy—it seemed such a miracle that she could ever have scaled that wall!

Nearer and louder roared the flames, and she had little time to delay. Her labour was not ended, neither was the danger past. She cast a hurried glance upwards over the ridge she was to climb, and advanced cautiously, step by step. Her soul kept saying within her, "I will not fall; I will not fall;" but she dared not look backwards again, lest even then she should grow giddy and miss her hold.

As she ascended, the ridge inclined nearer and nearer to the side of the cascade, until she found the stones slimy and dripping. This was an unforeseen peril. Still she resolutely advanced, taking the utmost pre-

caution at each step against slipping. At length she was at the top of the waterfall. She could look up into the upper gorge, and see the water come rushing down. There was space beside the brook for her to continue her flight, and the sides of the gorge above were far less steep and rugged than below. She was thrilled with hope. She had but one steep, high stair to surmount. She was getting her knee upon it, when a crashing sound in the underbrush arrested her attention. The crashing was followed by a commotion in the water, and she saw a huge black object plunge into the stream, and come sweeping down towards her.

On it came, straight at the rock on which she clung, and from which a motion, a touch, might suffice to hurl her back into the lower gorge. She saw what it was, and for a moment she was frozen with terror. She was directly in its path: it would not stop for her. The sight of the blazing woods below, however, brought it to a sudden halt. And there, close by the brink of the waterfall, facing her, not a yard distant, in the full glare of the fire, it rose slowly on its hind-feet to look—a monster of the forest, an immense black bear.

And now, but for the nightmare of horror that was upon her, Virginia might have perceived that the forest *above* the cascade was likewise wrapped in flames. The bear had been driven by the terror of them down the stream; and here, between the two fires, on the verge of the waterfall, the slight young girl and the great shaggy wild beast had met. She would have shrieked, but she had no voice. The bear also was silent; with his huge hairy bulk reared up before her, his paws pendent, and his jaws half open in a sort of stupid amazement, he stood and gazed, uttering never a growl.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE BURNING WOODS.

THE incessant excitement and fatigue of the past few days had caused Penn to fall asleep almost immediately after Carl had left him. The rude ground on which he stretched himself proved a blissful couch of repose. Virginia climbed the mountain to meet him, Carl was captured, and still he slept. The lost young girl had wandered within fifty yards of where he lay steeped in forgetfulness.

Penn was the first to wake, and still his heart whispered to him no syllable of the strange secret of the beautiful sleeper.

The grove had been but recently fired, and it would have been easy enough then for him to rush into the gorge and rescue her.

The glow on the clouds lighted all the broad mountain side. Under the ruddy canopy he ran—now through dimly-illumined woods, and now over bare rocks faintly flushed by the glare of the sky.

As he drew near the cave, he saw, on a rock high above him, a wild human figure making fantastic gestures, and prostrating itself towards the burning forests. He ran up to it, and, all out of breath, stood on the ledge.

"Cudjo! Cudjo! what are you doing here?"

The negro made no reply, but, folding his arms above his head, spread them forth towards the fire, bowing himself again and again, until his forehead touched the stone.

Penn shuddered with awe. For the first time in his life he found himself in the presence of an idolater. Cudjo belonged to a tribe of African fire-worshippers, from whom he had been stolen when a youth; and, although the sentiment of the old barbarous religion had smouldered for years forgotten in his breast, this night it had burst forth again, kindled by the terrible splendours of the burning mountain.

Penn waited for him to rise, then grasped his arm. The negro, startled into a consciousness of his presence, stared at him wildly.

"That is not God, Cudjo!"

"No, no, not your God, massa!—my God!" and the African smote his breast. "Me mos' forgit him; now me 'members! Him comin' fur burn up de white folks, and set de brack man free!"

Penn turned from Cudjo to watch the burning, and became aware of its threatening and rapidly-increasing magnitude. As he gazed, he became extremely alarmed for the safety of Stackridge and his friends. And where all this time was Carl? In vain he questioned Cudjo. He turned, and was hastening to the cave, when he met Pomp coming towards him.

"Oh, Pomp! what a fire that is!"

"What a fire it is going to be!" answered Pomp, with a lurid smile. "Our new neighbours have brought us bad luck. All those woods are gone. The fire is sweeping up directly towards us—it will pass over all the mountain—nothing will be left."

"And our friends!—Carl!—have you heard from them?"

"I have not seen Carl since he left the cave with you, nor any of Stackridge's people to-night."

"Then they are in the woods yet!"

"Yes; unless they have been wise enough to get out of them! I was just starting out to look for them. Who goes there?" poising his rifle.

"It's Carl!" exclaimed Penn, recognising the Confederate coat. But in an instant he saw his mistake.

"It's one of Ropes's men!" said Pomp. "He has discovered us—he shall die for setting my mountains on fire!"

"Hold!" Penn grasped his arm. "He is beckoning and calling!"

Pomp frowned as he lowered his rifle, and waited for the soldier to come up.

"What! is it you? I didn't know you in that dress, and came near shooting you, as you deserve, for wearing it!" And Pomp turned scornfully away.

The comer was Dan Pepperill, breathless with haste, horror-struck, haggard.

"Carl!" he gasped.

"What has happened to Carl?"

"Ben tuck! durned if he ain't! But that ar ain't the wust!"

"What, then, is the worst?" For that seemed bad enough.

"Virginny—Miss Villars!"

"Virginia! what of her?"

"She's down thar! in the fire!"

"Virginia in the fire!"

"She ar—durned if she ain't! Carl said she war on the mountain, and wanted me to hurry up and help her or find you; and I'd 'a' done it, but I couldn't git off till we was runnin' from the fires we'd sot; then I kinder got scattered o' puppus; t'other ones hung on to Carl, though, so I had to come alone."

Penn interrupted the loose and confused narrative: Virginia—had he *seen* her?

"Wal, I reckon I hev! Ye see I war huntin' fur her thar, above the round rock; fur Carl said——"

A short, sharp groan broke from the lips of Penn.

"You saw her!—where?"

His hoarse voice, his terrible look, bewildered the poor man more and more.

"I war a-tellin' ye! Don't break my arm, and don't look so durned fierce at me, and I'll out with the hull story. Ye see, I warn't to blame, now, nohow. They sot the fires; they sot the grove on our way back; and if I helped any, 'twas 'cause I had ter. But about *her*. Wal, I begun to the big rock, and war a-huntin' up along, till the grove got all in a blaze, and the red limbs begun ter fall, and I see 'twas high time for me to put. Says I ter myself, 'She ain't hyar; she ar off the mountain and safe ter hum afore this time, shore!' But jest then I heern a screech; it sounded right inter the grove, and I ran up as clust ter the fire 's I could, and looked, and thar I seen right in the middle on't, amongst the burnin' trees, a woman's

gownd, and then a face: 'twas her face, I knowed it, fur she hadn't nary bunnit on, and the fire shone on it bright as lightnin'! But thar war half-a-acre o' blazin' timber atween her and me; and besides, I was so struck up all of a heap, I couldn't do nary thing fur nigh about a minute—I couldn't even holler ter let her know I war thar. And 'fore I knowed what I war about, durned if she hadn't gone!"

"Where?—show me where!" he exclaimed with fierce vehemence, dragging Pepperill after him down the rocks.

"It war a considerable piece this side the round rock, nigh the upper eend o' the grove," said Dan in a jarred voice, clattering after him as fast as he could. "I reckon I kin find it, if 'tain't too late."

Too late? It must not be too late! Penn leaps down the ledges, and rushes through the thickets, as if he would overtake time itself. They reach the burning grove. Pepperill points out as nearly as he can the spot where he stood when he saw Virginia.

"There is a gorge just above there; perhaps she escaped into the gorge. Oh, if I had known!" groans the half-distracted youth, thinking how near he must have been to her when the fire awoke him.

The entrance to the gorge is all a gulf of flame, and the woods are blazing upwards along the cliffs, and all the forest beyond is turning to a sea of fire. The gorge must be reached. Back again up the steep slope they climb. Penn flies to the verge of the cliff. He looks down: the chasm is all a glare of light. There runs the red-gleaming brook. He sees the logs, the stones, the mosses, all the wild entanglement, deep below. But no Virginia. He runs almost into the crackling flames, in order to peer farther down the gorge. Then he darts away in the opposite direction, along the very brink of the precipice, among the fire-lit trees—Pepperill stupidly following. He seizes hold of a sapling, and, with his foot braced against its root, swings his body forward over the chasm, the better to gaze into its depths. From that position he casts his eye up the gorge. He sees the cascade falling over the ledge in a sheet of ruddy foam. He discovers the upper gorge, sees the big black bear come plunging and dashing down to the fall, and there lift himself on his haunches to look—and what is that other object, half hidden by a drooping bough? It is Virginia clinging to the rocks.

A moment before, had Penn made the discovery of the young girl still unharmed by fire, his happiness would have been supreme. But now joy was checked by an appalling fear. The bear might seize her, or with a stroke of his paw hurl her from his path.

Penn caught hold of the bough that impeded his view, and saw how precarious was her hold. He dared not so much as call to her, or shout to

frighten the animal away, lest, her attention being for an instant distracted, she might turn her head, lose her balance, and fall backwards from the rocks.

"Durned if she ain't thar!" said Dan, excitedly. "But she's got a powerful slim chance with the bar!"

"Come with me!" said Penn.

He ran to the upper gorge, showed himself on the bank above the cascade, and shouted. The bear, as he anticipated, turned and looked up at him. Virginia at the same time saw her deliverer.

"Hold on! I'll be with you in a minute!" he cried in a voice heard above the noise of the waterfall and the roar of the flames.

She clung fast, hope and gladness thrilling her soul, and giving her new strength.

To reach her, Penn had a precipitous descent of near thirty feet to make. He did not pause to consider the difficulty of getting up again, or the peril of encountering the bear. He jumped down over a perpendicular ledge upon a projection ten feet below. Beyond that was a rapid slope covered with moss and thin patches of soil, with here and there a shrub, and here and there a tree. Striking his heels into the soil, and catching at whatever branch or stem presented itself, he took the plunge. Clinging, sliding, falling, he arrived at the bottom. In a posture half sitting, half standing, and considerably jarred, he found himself face to face with Bruin. The animal had settled down on all-fours, and now, with his surly, depressed head turned sullenly to one side, he looked at Penn, and growled. Penn looked at him, and said nothing. He might, by diverting the brute's attention, give Virginia time to get into a position of safety. So he stood up, and fixed his eyes on the red blinking eyes of the ferocious beast. Something Bruin did not like: it might have been the youth's company and valiant bearing, but more probably his observation of the fire had satisfied him that he was out of his place. With another growl, that seemed to say, "All I ask is to be let alone," he seceded—turning his head still more, twisting his body around after it, and retreating up the gorge.

In an instant Penn was at the young girl's side: his hand clasped hers: he drew her up over the rock.

In spite of all the dangers behind them, and of the dangers still before, both felt, in that moment, a shock of mutual bliss. Neither had ever known till then how dear the other was.

Pepperill had by this time leaped down upon the bulge of the bank. There he waited for them, shouting—

"Hurry up! the bar'll meet the fire up thar, and be comin' down agin!"

Clasping the burden more precious to him than life, resolved in his soul to part with it only with life, Penn toiled heavily up the bank, down which he had descended with such tremendous swiftness a few minutes before.

But it was not in Virginia's nature to remain long a helpless incumbrance. Seeing the labour and peril still before them, her will returned, and with it her strength. She grasped a branch by which he was trying in vain with one hand, holding her with the other, to draw them both up a steep place. Her prompt action enabled him to seize the trunk of a young tree: she assisted still, and, slipping from his hands, clung to it until he had reached the next tree above. He pulled her up after him, and then pushed her on still farther, until Pepperill could reach her from where he stood. A minute later the three were together on the summit of the slope.

But now they had above them the ten feet of sheer perpendicularity down which Dan had indiscreetly jumped, following Penn's lead. A single hand above them would now be worth several hands below.

"What a fool I war! durned if I warn't!" said Dan, endeavouring unsuccessfully to find a place by which he could re-ascend.

"Get on my shoulders!" And Penn braced himself against the ledge.

Dan made the attempt, but fell, and rolled down the bank.

Just then a grinning black face appeared above.

"Gib me de gal! gib me de gal!" and a prodigiously long arm reached down.

"Oh, Cudjo! you are an angel!" cried Penn. "Dan! Here!"

Pepperill was up the bank again in a minute, at Penn's side. They lifted Virginia above their heads. Holding on by a sapling with one hand, the negro extended the other far down over the ledge. Those miraculous arms of his seemed to have been made expressly for this service. He grasped a wrist of the girl; with the other hand she clung to his arm until he had drawn her up to the sapling; this she seized, and helped herself out. Then once more Penn gave Daniel his shoulder, while Cudjo gave him a hand from above, and Daniel was safe. Last of all, Penn remained.

"Cotch holt hyar!" said Cudjo, extending towards him the end of a branch he had broken from a tree.

To this Penn held fast, assisting himself with his feet against the ledge, while Cudjo and Dan hauled him up.

"Good Cudjo! how came you here?"

"Me see you and Pepperill a-gwine inter de fire. So me foller."

"This is the old man's daughter, Cudjo."

Cudjo regarded the beautiful young girl with a look of vague wonder and admiration.

"He remembers me," said Virginia. "I saw him the night he climbed in at Toby's window." She gave him her hand; it trembled with emotion. "I thank you, Cudjo, for what you have done for my father—and for me."

"Now, Cudjo! show us the nearest and easiest path. We must take her to the cave—there is no other way."

"You must be right spry, den!" said Cudjo. "De fire am a-runnin' ober dat way powerful!"

Penn would have carried Virginia in his arms, but she would not suffer him.

"I can go where you can!" she cried, once more full of spirit and daring. "Just give me your hand—you shall see!"

Penn took one of her hands, Pepperill the other, and with their aid, supporting her, lifting her, she sprang lightly up the ledges, and from rock to rock.

Cudjo, carrying Dan's gun, ran on before, leading the way through hollows and among bushes, by ways known only to himself. So they reached a part of the woods, by the thin skirts of which he hoped to head off the fire. Too late—it was there before them. It ran swiftly among the fallen leaves and twigs, and spread far into the woods.

The negro turned back. There was a wild grimace in his face, and a glitter in his eyes, as he threw up his hand, by way of signal that their flight in that direction was cut off.

"Cudjo! what is to be done?" and Penn drew Virginia towards him with a look that showed his fears were all for her.

"We can't git off down the mountain, nuther!" said Dan. "It's gittin' into the woods down thar. It'll be all around us in no time."

"You let Cudjo do what him pleases?" said the black.

"I can trust you! Can you, Virginia?"

"He should know what is best. Yes, I will trust him."

"Take dat ar!" Pepperill received his gun. "Now you look out fur yourselves. Me tote de gal."

And catching up Virginia, before Penn could stop him, or question him, he rushed with her into the fire.

Penn ran after him, perceiving at once the meaning of this bold act. The woods were not yet fairly kindled; only now and then the loose bark of a dry trunk was beginning to blaze. Cudjo leaped over the line of flame that was running along the ground, and bore Virginia high above it to the other side. Penn followed, and Dan came close behind. They then had before them a tract of blackened ground which the flames had swept, leaving here and there a dead limb or mat of leaves still burning.

These little fires were easily avoided. But they soon came to another

line of flame raging on the upper side of the burnt tract. They were almost out of the woods: only that red, crackling hedge fenced them in; but that they could not pass; the underbrush all along the forest edge was burning. And there they were, brought to a halt, half-stifled with smoke, in the midst of woods kindling and blazing all around them.

"May as well pull up hyar, and take a bref," remarked Cudjo grimly, placing Virginia on a log too dank with decay and moss to catch fire easily. "Den we's try 'em agin."

A horrible suspicion crossed Penn's mind: the fanatical fire-worshipper had brought them there to destroy them—to sacrifice them to his god!

"Virginia!"—eagerly laying hold of her arm—"we must retreat! It will soon be too late! We can get out of the woods where we came in, if we go at once!"

"Beg pardon, sar, said Cudjo, stamping out fire in the leaves by the end of the log, and he looked up through the smoke at Penn, with the old malignant grin on his apish face.

"What do you mean, Cudjo?" said Penn, in an agony of doubt.

"Can't get back dat way, sar!"

"Then you have led us here to destroy us!"

"You's no longer trust Cudjo!" was the negro's only reply.

"Didn't we trust you? Haven't we come through fire, following you? Oh, Cudjo! more than once you have helped to save my life! You have helped to save this life, dearer than mine! Why do you desert us now?"

"'Sert you? Cudjo no 'sert you." But the negro spoke sullenly, and there was still a sparkle of malignancy in his look

"Then why do you stop here "

"Hugh! tink we's go trough dat fire like we done trough tudder?"

"What then are we to do?"

"You's no longer trust Cudjo!" was once more the sullen response.

Virginia, with her quick perceptions, saw at once what Penn was either too dull or too much excited to see.

"*I* trust you, Cudjo!"—and she laid her hand frankly and confidingly on his shoulder. "Did I tremble, did I shrink when you carried me through the fire? I shall never forget how brave, how good you are! He trusts you too—only he is so afraid for me! You can forgive that, Cudjo."

"She is right," said Penn, though still in doubt. "If you know a way to save her, don't lose a moment!"

"He knows; on'y let him take his time," said Pepperill, whose firm faith in the negro's good-will shamed Penn for his distrust. But Pepperill did not love, as Penn loved, the girl whose life was in danger, and he had

not seen the evidences of Cudjo's fire-worshipping fanaticism which Penn had seen.

Under the influence of Virginia's gentle and soothing words the glitter of resentment died out of the negro's face. But his aspect was still morose.

"De fire take his time to burn out, so we's take our time too," said he. "You try your chance wid Cudjo agin, miss?"

"Certainly, for I am sure you will take us safely through yet!'

The negro was evidently well pleased. He examined carefully the line of fire in the undergrowth. And now Penn discovered, what Cudjo had known from the first, that there were barren ledges above, and that the fire was rapidly burning itself out along their base. An opening through which a courageous and active man might dash unscathed soon presented itself. Then Cudjo waited no longer to "take bref." He caught Virginia in his arms and bore her through the second line of fire as he had borne her through the first, and placed her in safety on the rocks above.

"Cudjo, my brave, my noble fellow!" said Penn, deeply affected, "I have wronged you; I confess it with shame. Forgive me!"

"Cudjo hab nuffin to forgib," replied the negro, with a laugh of pleasure. "Neber mention um, massa! All right now! Reckon we's better be gitt'n out o' dis yer smudge!"

He showed the way, and Penn and Daniel helped Virginia up the rocks as before.

They had reached a smooth and unsheltered ledge near the ravine, a little below the mouth of the cave, when a hideous and inhuman shriek rent the air.

"What dat?" cried Cudjo, stopping short, and his visage in the smoky and lurid light looked wild with superstitious alarm.

The sound was repeated, louder, nearer, more hideous than before, seeming to make the very atmosphere shudder above their heads.

"Go on, Cudjo! go on!" Penn commanded.

The terrified black crouched and gibbered, but would not stir. Then straightway a sharp clatter, as of iron hoofs flying at a furious gallop, resounded along the mountain-side.

"Stackridge's hoss!" exclaimed Cudjo, recovering from his fright, leaping up, and flinging abroad his long arms in the air. "Wiv some poor debil onter him's back!"

The little group stood motionless, chilled with horror. The beast came thundering on, with lips of terror parted, nostrils wide and snorting, mane and tail flying in the wild air, hoofs striking fire from the rocks. A human being—a man—was lying close to his neck, and clinging fast—the face hidden by the tossing and streaming mane: a fearful ride!

Approaching the group on the ledge, the animal veered, and shot past them like a thunderbolt; clearing rocks, hollows, bushes, with incredible bounds; nearing the ravine, but halting not; dashing into the thickets there, missing suddenly the ground beneath his feet, striking only the air and yielding boughs with frantic hoofs; then plunging down with a dull, reverberant crash—horse and unknown rider rolling together over rocks and spiked limbs to the bottom of the ravine.

CHAPTER XXX.

REFUGE.

FOR a moment the little group stood dumb and motionless on the ledge. Penn was the first to speak.

"Which of us goes down into the ravine?"

"Wha' fur?" said Cudjo.

"To find him."

"Dat no good! Deader'n de debil, shore!" And the negro started off, doggedly, towards the cave.

Then Penn said, pointing to Virginia, "Stay with her, Daniel. I will go!"

"No, I be durned if ye shall! Hapgood, you stick to her: take this yer gun, and I'll slip down inter the holler, and see whuther the cuss's alive or dead, anyhow."

"Oh, Mr. Pepperill, if you will!" said Virginia, overjoyed.

Penn remonstrated—rather feebly, it must be confessed.

"I'll take her to her father, and hurry back, and meet you."

"All right!" came the response from Dan, already far down the rocks.

"The cave is close by," said Penn; "there is Cudjo, waiting for us!"

Coming up with the black, and once more following his lead, they descended along the shelf of rocks, between the thickets and the overhanging ledge. So they came to the still dark jaws of the cavern. Virginia clung tightly to Penn's hand as they groped their way in.

At first nothing was visible but a few smouldering embers, winking their sleepy eyes in the dark. Out of these Cudjo soon blew a little blaze, which he fed with sticks and bits of bark until it lighted up fitfully the dim interior and shadowy walls of his abode.

Penn hushed Virginia with a finger on his lips, and restrained her from throwing herself forward upon the rude bed, where the blind old man was just awaking from a sound sleep.

In that profound subterranean solitude the roar of the fiery breakers,

dashing on the mountain side, was subdued to a faint murmur, less distinct than the dripping of water from roof to floor in the farther recesses of the cave. There, left alone, lulled by the dull, monotonous trickle, Mr. Villars had slept tranquilly through all the horrors of that night.

"Is it you, Penn? Safe again!" And, sitting up, he grasped the young man's hand. "What news from my dear girl?—from my two dear girls?" he added, remembering Virginia was not his only child.

"Toby did not come to the rock," said Penn, still holding Virginia back.

"Oh! did he not?" It seemed a heavy disappointment; but the patient old man rallied straightway, saying, with his accustomed cheerfulness, "No doubt something hindered him; no doubt he would have come if he could. My poor dear girl, how I wish I could have got word to her that I am safe!"

"I believe all is for the best," said Penn, his voice trembling.

"No doubt, no doubt. Yes, Penn, God knows what is best for us all. His will be done!"

But Virginia could restrain herself no longer; her sobs would burst forth.

"Father! father!" throwing herself upon his neck. "Oh, my dear, dear father!"

Penn had feared the effect of the sudden surprise upon the feeble old man, and had meant to break the good news to him softly. But human nature was too strong; his own emotions had baffled him, and the pious little artifice proved a complete failure. So now he could do nothing but stand by and make grim faces, struggling to keep down what was mastering him, and turning away blindly from the bed.

Even Cudjo appeared deeply affected, staring stupidly, and winking something like a tear from the whites of his eyes at the sight of the father embracing his child, and the white locks mingling with the wet, tangled curls on her cheek. He was a ludicrous, pathetic object, winking and staring thus; and Penn laughed and cried too at sight of him.

"Luk dar!" said Cudjo, coming up to him, and pointing at the little walled chamber that served as his pantry. "She hab dat fur her dressum room. Sleep dar, too, if she likes."

"Thank you, Cudjo! it will be very acceptable, I am sure."

"Me clar it up fur her all scrumptious!" added the negro, with a grin.

Penn had thought of that. But now he had other business on his hands: he must hasten to find Pepperill; nor could he keep anxious thoughts of Stackridge and his friends out of his mind. And Pomp—where all this time was Pomp? He had hoped to find him and the patriots all safely arrived in the cave.

Virginia was seated on the bed by her father's side. Penn threw a blanket over the dear young shoulders, to shield her from the sudden cold of the cave; then left her relating her adventures, and beckoned to Cudjo, who followed him out.

"Cudjo!"—the black glided to his side as they emerged from the ravine—"you must go and find Pomp."

Cudjo laughed and shrugged.

"No use't! Reckon Pomp take keer o' hisself heap better'n we's take keer on him!"

Forgetting Dan and the unknown horseman in his great solicitude for his absent friends, Penn climbed the ledges, and gazed away in the direction of the camp, and beheld the forest there a raging gulf of fire.

Penn watched in vain for their coming—in vain for some signal of their safety on the crags above the forest.

He sent Cudjo to find Dan, ran to the cave for Pomp's glass, and returned to the ledge. There he waited; there he watched; still in vain.

Pepperill came clambering up the rocks. Penn turned eagerly to meet and question him.

"Find him?"

"Wal, a piece on him."

"Killed?"

"I reckon he ar that!"

"Who is it?"

"Durned if I kin tell! He's jammed in thar 'twixt two gre't stuns, and the hoss is piled on top, and you can't see nary featur' of his face, only the legs—but durned if I know the legs!"

"Couldn't you move the horse?"

"Nary a bit. His neck is broke, and he lays wedged so clust, right on top o' the poor cuss, 'twould take a yoke o' oxen to drag him out."

"Are you sure the man is dead?"

"Shore? I reckon! He had one arm loose. I jest lifted it, and it drapped jest like a club when I let go; then I see 'twas broke square off jest above the elbow, about where the backbone o' the hoss comes. Made me durned sick!"

"What have you got in your hand?"

"A boot—one o' his'n—thought I'd pull it off, his leg stuck up so kind o' handy: didn't know but some on ye might know the boot." And Dan held it up for Penn's inspection.

"What is this on it? Blood?"

"It ar so! Mebby it's the hoss's, and then agin mebby it's his'n; I hadn't noticed it afore."

"I'll go back with you, Daniel. Together perhaps we can move the horse."

"Ye're behind time for that! The fire's thar. I hadn't only jest time to git cl'ar on't myself. The poor cuss is a-br'ilin'!"

"K-r-r-r! hi! don't ye har me callin'?" Cudjo sprang up the ledge. "Fire's a-comin' to de cave! All in de brush dar! Can't get in widout ye go now!"

"And Pomp and the rest! They will be shut out, if they are not lost already!"

"Pomp know well 'nuff what him 'bout, tell ye! Gorry, massa! ye got to come, if Cudjo hab to tote ye!"

Yielding to his importunity, Penn quitted the ledge. On the shelf of rock Cudjo paused to gnash his teeth at the flames sweeping up towards them. He had long since recovered from his fit of superstitious frenzy. He had seen the fire burning the woods that sheltered his cave, instead of going intelligently to work to destroy the dwellings of the whites, and he no longer regarded it as a deity worthy of his worship.

"All dis yer brush be burnt up! Den nuffin' to hide Cudjo's house!"

"Don't despair, Cudjo!"

Even as Penn spoke, he felt a cool spatter on his hand. He looked up; sudden, plashy drops smote his face.

"Rain! It is coming! Thank Heaven for the rain!"

At the same time the wind shifted, and blew fitful gusts down the mountain. Then it lulled, and the rain poured.

"Cudjo, your thickets are saved!" said Penn exultantly.

"What news?" asked the old man as he entered the cave.

"It is morning, and it rains; but our friends are still away.—The man is dead," aside to Virginia.

"Heaven grant they be safe somewhere!" said the old man. "And Pomp?"

"He is missing too."

There was a long deep silence. A painful suspense seemed to hold every heart still, while they listened. Suddenly a strange noise was heard, as of a ghost walking. Louder and louder it sounded—hollow, faint, far off. Was it on the rocks over their heads, or in caverns beneath their feet?

"Told ye so! told ye so!" said Cudjo, laughing with wild glee.

The fire had burnt low again, and he was in the act of kindling it, when he seemed to listen to some sound, and, seizing a pan, inverted it over the little remnant of a flame. In an instant the cave was dark. It was some seconds before the eyes of the inmates grew accustomed to the

gloom, and perceived the glimmer of mingled daylight and firelight that shone in at the entrance.

"Luk a dar! luk a dar!" said Cudjo.

And turning their eyes in the opposite direction, they saw a faint golden glow in the recesses of the cave. The footsteps approached; the glow increased; then the dark form of Pomp was shown by the light of his own torch. Penn hastened to meet him, and to demand tidings of Stackridge's party. Pomp first saluted Virginia, holding the torch above his head as he bowed. Then turning to Penn—

"Your friends are all safe, I believe."

"All?" Penn eagerly asked, his thoughts on the luckless horseman. "None missing?"

"There were three absent when I reached their camp. They had gone on a foraging expedition. I found the rest waiting for them, standing their ground against the fire, which was roaring up towards them at a tremendous rate. Soon the foragers came in. They brought a basket of potatoes and a bag of meal, but no meat. Withers had caught a pig, but it had got away from him before he could kill it, and he lost it in the dark. The others were cursing the rascals who had set the woods afire; but Withers lamented the pig.

"'Gentlemen,' said I, 'you have not much time to mourn either for the woods or the pork. We must take care of ourselves.' And I offered to bring them here. But just then we heard a rushing noise; it sounded like some animal coming up the course of the brook, and the next minute it was amongst us—a big black bear, frightened out of his wits, singed by the fire, and furious.

"You will readily believe that such an unexpected supply of fresh meat, sent by Providence within their reach, proved a temptation to the hungry. Withers, in his hurry to make up for the loss of the pig, ran to head the fellow off, and attempted to stop him with his musket after it had missed fire. In an instant the gun was lying on the ground several yards off, and Withers was sprawling. The bear had done the little business for him with a single stroke of his paw; then he passed on, directly over Withers's body, which happened to be in his way, but which he minded no more than if it had been a bundle of rags. All this time we couldn't fire a shot: there was the risk, you see, of hitting Withers instead of the bear. Even after he was knocked down he seemed to think he had nothing more formidable than his stray pig to deal with, and tried to catch the bear by the tail as he ran over him."

"So ye lost de bar!" cried Cudjo, greatly excited. "Fool, tink o' cotchin' on him by de tail!"

"Still we couldn't fire, for he was on his legs again in a second, chasing the bear's tail directly before our muzzles," said Pomp, quietly laughing. "But luckily a stick flew up under his feet. Down he went again. That gave two or three of us a chance to send some lead after the beast. He got a wound. We tracked him by his blood on the ground—we could see it plain as day by the glare of light; it led straight towards the fire that was running up through the leaves and the thickets on the north. I expected that when he met it he would turn again; but he did not. We were just in time to see him plough through it, and hear him growl and snarl at the flames that maddened him, and which he was foolish enough to stop and fight. Then he went on again. We followed. Nobody minded the scorching. We kept him in sight till he met the fire again—for it was now all around us. This time his heart failed him; he turned back, only to meet us and get a handful of bullets in his head. That finished him, and he fell dead."

"Poor brute!" said Mr. Villars; "he found his human enemies more merciless than the fire!"

"That's so," said Pomp with a smile. "But we had not much time to moralise on the subject then. The fire we had leaped through had become impassable behind us. The men hurried this way and that way to find an outlet. They found only the fire; it was on every side of us, like a sea. The spot where we were was only an island in the midst of it; that too would soon be covered. The bear was forgotten where he lay; the men grew wild with excitement, as again and again they attempted to break through different parts of the ring that was narrowing upon us, and failed. Brave men they are, but death by fire, you know, is too horrible!"

"How large was this spot—this island?" asked Penn.

"Perhaps twenty acres when we first found ourselves inclosed in it; but every minute it was diminishing, and the heat there was something terrific.

"'Gentlemen,' said I, 'I understand this ground perhaps better than you do. Don't abandon your game; you have lost your meal and potatoes, and you will have need of the bear.'

"'But what is the use of roast meat if we are to be roasted too?' said Withers, who is always droll, whatever happens.

"Then Stackridge spoke. He proposed that they should place themselves under my command, for I knew the woods; and while they had been running to and fro in disorder, I had been carefully observing the ground and forming my plans. I laughed within myself to see Deslow alone hang back; he was unwilling to owe his life to one of my complexion—one who had been a slave. But I showed them that even the despised black may,

under God's providence, be of some use to white men, besides being their slave: I had that satisfaction!" said Pomp, proudly smiling. "Stackridge was right: I had observed: I saw what I could do. On one side was a chasm which you know, Mr. Hapgood. The fire was beyond, and it also burned a little on the side nearest to us. But the vegetation there is thin, you remember. The chasm could be reached without difficulty.

"'Follow me who will!' said I.

"'Follow—where?' said Deslow.

"I couldn't help smiling at the man's distress. All the rest were prepared to obey my directions, and it was hard for him to separate himself from them; but it seemed harder still for him to trust in me. I made for the chasm. All followed, even Deslow, dragging and lugging the bear. We came to the brink. The place, I must confess, had an awful look, in the light of the trees burning all around it. Deslow was not the only one who shrank back then, for though the spot was known to some of them they had never explored it, and could not guess what it led to. It was difficult, in the first place, to descend into it; it looked still more difficult ever to get out again; and there was nothing to prevent the burning limbs above from falling into it, or the trees that grew in it from catching fire. For this is the sink, Mr. Villars, which you have probably heard of, where the woods have been undermined by the action of water in the limestone rocks, and an acre or more of the mountain has fallen in, with all its trees, so that what was once the roof of an immense cavern is now a little patch of the forest growing seventy feet below the surface of the earth. The sides are precipitous and projecting. Only one tree throws a strong branch upwards to the edge of the sink.

"'This way,' said I, 'and we are safe!'

"It was a trial of their faith, for I waited to explain nothing. First I tumbled the bear off the brink. We heard him go crashing down into the abyss, and strike the bottom with a sound full of awfulness to the uninitiated. Then I seized the limb and threw myself into the tree.

"'Where he can go we can!' I heard Stackridge say, and he followed me. I took his gun, and handed it to him again when he was safe in the tree. He did the same for another, and so all got into the branches and climbed down after us. The trunk has no limbs within twenty feet of the bottom, but there is a smaller tree leaning into it which we got into, and so reached the ground.

"'Now,' said I, when all were down, 'I will show you where you are.' And opening the bushes, I discovered a path leading down the rocks into the caverns, of which this cave is only a branch. Then I made them all take an oath never to betray the secret of what I had shown them. I then

lighted one of the torches Cudjo and I keep for our convenience when we come in that way, and gave it to them; lighted another for my own use; invited them to make themselves quite at home in my absence; and here I am."

Still the mystery with regard to the unknown horseman was in no wise explained. Pomp, informed of what had happened, arose hastily. Penn followed him from the cave. Pepperill accompanied them, to show the way. It was raining steadily; but the thickets in which lay the dead horse and his rider were burning still.

"As I was going to Stackridge's camp," said Pomp, "I thought I saw a man crawling over the rocks above where the horse was tied. I ran up to find him, but he was gone. Peace to his ashes, if it was he!"

"Won't be much o' the cuss left but ashes," remarked Pepperill.

Pomp ascended the ledges, and stood, silent and stern, gazing at the destruction of his beloved woods. All at once he seemed to rouse himself, and direct his attention more particularly to that part of the woods in which the patriots' camp had been.

"Come with me, Pepperill, if you would help do a good job."

They started off, and were soon out of sight. As Penn turned from gazing after them he heard a voice calling from the opposite side of the ravine. He looked, but could see no one. The figure to which the voice belonged was hidden by the bushes. The bushes moved, however; the figure was descending into the ravine. It arrived at the bottom, crossed, and began to ascend the steep side towards the cave. Penn concealed himself, and waited until it had nearly emerged from the thickets beneath him, and he could distinctly hear the breath of a man panting and blowing with the toil of climbing. Then a well-known voice said in a hoarse whisper—

"Massa Hapgood! dat you?"

And peering over the bank, he saw, upturned in the rain and murky light, among the wet bushes, the black, grinning face of old Toby.

He responded by reaching down, grasping the negro's hand, and drawing him up. The grin on the old man's face was a ghastly one, and his eyes rolled as he stammered forth—

"Miss Jinny—ye seen Miss Jinny?"

Penn did not answer immediately; he was considering whether it would be safe to conduct Toby into the cave. Toby grew terrified.

"Don't say ye haint seen her, Massa Penn—ye kill ol' Toby if ye do! I done lost her!" And the poor old faithful fellow sobbed out his story—how Virginia had disappeared, and how, on discovering the woods to be on fire, he had set out in search of her. and been wandering he scarcely

knew where ever since. "Now don't say ye don't know nuffin' about her! —don't say dat!"

"I'll say anything you wish me to, good old Toby, only give me a chance."

"Den say you *has* seen her."

"I *has seen her*," repeated Penn.

"Oh, bress you, Massa Penn! And she ar safe—say dat too."

"*She ar safe*," said Penn, laughing.

"Bress ye for dat!" And Toby, weeping with joy, kissed the young man's hand again and again. "And ye knows whar she ar?"

"Yes, Toby. So now get up; don't be kneeling on the rocks here in the rain."

"Jes' one word more! Say ye got her and ol' Massa Villars safe stowed away, and ye'll take me to see 'em; den dis ol' nigger'll bress you and de Lord and dem, and be willin' fur to die!—only say dat, massa!"

"Ah! did I promise to say all you wished?"

"Yes, you did—you did so, Massa Penn!" cried Toby triumphantly.

"Then I suppose I must say that too. Cudjo!" to the proprietor of the cave, who just then put out his head to reconnoitre—"Cudjo! here is your friend Toby, come to pay his master and mistress a visit."

"What business he got hyar?" said Cudjo crossly. "We's hab all de wuld, and creation besides, comin' bime-by!"

"Cudjo! you knows ol' Toby, Cudjo?" said Toby, in the softest and most conciliatory tone imaginable.

"Nose ye!" Cudjo sniffed disdainfully. "Yes, and wish you'd keep fudder off."

"Why, Cudjo! don't you 'member Toby? Las' time I seed you—you 'member dat, Cudjo?"

"Don't 'member nuffin'."

"'Twan't you, den, got inter my winder, and done skeert me mos' t' def 'fore I found out 'twas my ol' 'quaintance Cudjo, come fur Massa Penn's clo'es. Dat ar wan't you, hey?" And Toby's honest indignation cropped out through the thin crust of deprecating obsequiousness which he still thought it politic to maintain.

Penn got under the shelter of the ledge and waited for the dispute to end. It was evident to him that Cudjo was not half so ill-natured as he appeared; but, feeling himself in a position of something like official importance, he had the human weakness to wish to make the most of it.

"Your massa and missis bery well off. Dey in my house. No room dar for you. Ain't wanted hyar, nohow!" turning his back very much like people of lighter complexion, when clad in brief authority.

"Ain't wanted, Cudjo? You don't know what you's sayin' now. Whar my ol' massa and young missis is, dar ol' Toby's wanted. Can't lib widout me, dey can't. Ol' massa wants me to nuss him. Ye don't tink—you's a nigger widout no kind ob 'sideration, Cudjo."

"Talk o' you nussin him when him's got Pomp!"

"Pomp! what can Pomp do? Wouldn't trust him to nuss a chick sicken!" Toby talked backwards in his excitement.

"Ki! didn't him take Massa Hapgood and make him well? Don't ye know nuffin'?"

Toby seemed staggered for a moment, but he rallied quickly, and said—

"He cure Massa Hapgood? He done jes' nuffin' 't all fur him. De fac's is, I had de nussin' on him for a spell at fust, and gib him a start. Dar's eberyting in a start, Cudjo."

"Oh, what a stupid nigger!" said Cudjo. "Hyar's Massa Hapgood hisself—leab it to him now."

"You are both right," said Penn. "Toby did nurse me and give me a good start, for which I shall always thank him."

"Dar! tol' ye so—tol' ye so!" said Toby.

"But it was Pomp who afterwards cured me," added Penn.

"Dar! tol' you so!" cried Cudjo, while Toby's countenance fell.

"For while Toby is a capital nurse" (Toby brightened), "Pomp is a first-rate doctor" (Cudjo grinned). "So don't dispute any more. Shake hands with your old friend, Cudjo, and show him into your house."

Cudjo was still reluctant, but just then occurred a pleasing incident which made him feel good-natured towards everybody. Pomp and Pepperill arrived, bringing the bag of meal and the basket of potatoes which the bear-hunters had forsaken in the woods, and which the rain had preserved from the fire.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LYSANDER TAKES POSSESSION.

GAD the "Sleeper" (he had earned that title) had been himself placed under guard for drinking too much of the prisoners' liquor, and suffering them to escape. Miserable, sullen, thirsty, he languished in confinement.

"Let 'em shoot me and done with it, if that's the penalty," said this chivalrous son of the South, "only give a feller suthin' to drink!"

But the Confederates might be expected to find a better use for an able-bodied fellow like Gad than to shoot him.

The use they found for him was this: he had been a mighty hunter, and professed to know the mountains better than any other man. Accordingly, on the recommendation of his friend Lieutenant Ropes, it was resolved to send him to spy out the position of the patriots.

"I'll see that you have light enough," said Ropes significantly, "and you'll have pardon for your offence and a bottle of whisky."

It was the evening of the firing of the forests. How well the lieutenant fulfilled his part of the engagement we have seen.

Gad put the bottle in his pocket and set off at dark by routes obscure and circuitous to get upon the trail of the patriots.

All the morning Gad's return was anxiously awaited. No doubt there were good reasons why he did not come. So said his friend Silas, and his friend Silas was right: there were good reasons.

"Anyhow, I kep' my word—I giv' him light enough, I reckon!" chuckled Silas.

That was true—Gad had had light enough, and to spare.

The rain continued all the morning. Perhaps that was what detained the scout, for it was known that he had a great aversion to water.

In the afternoon came one with tidings from the mountain. It was not Gad. It was old Toby.

He was seized by some soldiers and taken before Captain Sprowl at the schoolhouse.

"Toby, you black devil, where have you been?"

This was Lysander's chivalrous way of addressing an inferior whom he wished to terrify.

Now, if there was a person in the world whom Toby detested it was this roving Lysander, who had disgraced the Villars family by marrying into it. However, he concealed his contempt with a politic hypocrisy worthy of a whiter skin.

"Please, sar," said the old negro, cap in hand, "I'se been lookin' for my ol' massa and young missis."

"Well, what luck, you lying scoundrel?"

"Oh, no luck't all, I 'sure you, sar!"

"What! couldn't you find 'em? Don't you lie, you ——!" (We may as well omit the captain's energetic epithets.)

"Oh, sar!"—Toby looked up earnestly with counterfeit grief in his wrinkled old face—"dey ain't nowhars on de face ob de 'arth!"

"Not on the face of the earth!"

"If dey is, den de fire's done burnt 'em all up. I seen, down in a big holler, a place whar somebody's been burnt, shore. Dar's a man and a hoss on top on him, and de hoss's har am all burnt off, and de mans'

trouse's-legs am all burnt off too, and one foot's got a fried boot onto and tudder han't got nuffin' on, but jes' de skin and bone all roasted to a crisp, and I 'specs dar's 'nuff sight more dead folks down in dar, on'y I didn't da's to look, it make me feel so skeerylike!"

All which and much more Toby related so circumstantially that Captain Sprowl was strongly impressed with the truth of the story. Great, theresore, was the joy of the captain. Perhaps the patriots had been destroyed: he hoped so! Still more ardently he hoped that Virginia had perished with her father. For was he not the husband of Salina? And the snug little Villars property, did he not covet it?

"Can you show me that spot, Toby?"

"Don'o', sar: I specs I could, sar."

"Don't you forget about it! Now, Toby, go home to your mistress—my wife's your mistress, you know—and wait till you are wanted."

"Yes, sar"—bowing and pulling his foretop.

Captain Sprowl did not overhear the irrepressible chuckle of satisfaction in which the old negro indulged as he retired, or he would have perceived that he had been trifled with.

As for Toby, he hastened home as fast as his tired old legs would carry him, chuckling all the way over his lucky escape, and the cunning answers by which he had mystified the captain without telling a downright falsehood.

"Ob course dey ain't on de face ob de 'arth, long as dey's inside on't! Hi, hi, hi!"

He did not greatly relish reporting himself to Salina; nevertheless, he had been ordered to do so, not only by the captain, but by those whose authority he respected more.

Salina, though so bitter, was not without natural affection, and she had suffered much and waited anxiously ever since Toby, terrified into the avowal of his belief that Virginia was in the burning woods, had set out in search of her.

To some sorrow is but a preparation for a diviner joy. All things, indeed, work together for their good; since, whether fair fortune comes or ill, they possess the love and faith that transmute it into blessing.

This love, this faith, Salina lacked. She fostered in their place that selfishness and discontent which sour the soul. Every blow upon her heart had hardened it. Every trial embittered and angered her. Hence the swollen and flaming eyes, the impatient and scowling looks, with which she met the returning Toby.

"Where is Virginia?"

"Dat I can't bery well say, Miss Salina," replied Toby, scratching his

woolly head. He would never sacrifice his family pride so far as to call her Mrs. Sprowl.

"How dare you come back without her?" And she heaped upon him the bitterest reproaches. It was he who, through his cowardice, had been the cause of Virginia's night adventure. It was he who had ruined everything by concealing her departure until it was too late. Then he might have found her, if he had so resolved. But if he could not, why had he remained absent all day?

Under this sharp fire of accusations Toby stood with ludicrous indifference, grinning, and scratching his head. At length he scratched out of it a little roll of paper that had been confided to his wool for safe keeping, in case he should be seized and searched. It fell upon the floor. He hastily snatched it up, and gave it, with obsequious alacrity, to Mrs. Sprowl. She took, unrolled it, and read. It was a pencilled note in the handwriting of Virginia.

"DEAR SISTER,—Thanks to a kind Providence and to kind friends, we are safe. I was rescued last night from the most frightful dangers in the burning woods. I had come, without your knowledge, to get news of our dear father. I am now with him. He has excellent shelter and devoted attendants; but the comforts of his home are wanting, and I have learned how much he is dependent upon us for his happiness. For this reason I shall remain with him as long as I can. To relieve your mind we send Toby back to you.

"V."

That evening Captain Sprowl entered the house of the absent Mr. Villars with the air of one who had just come into possession of that little piece of property. He nodded with satisfaction at the walls, glanced approvingly at the furniture, curved his lip rather contemptuously at the books (as much as to say, "I'll sell off all that sort of rubbish"), and expressed decided pleasure at sight of old Toby. "Worth eight hundred dollars, that nigger is!"

"Well, Sallie, my girl"—throwing himself into the old clergyman's easy chair—"here we are at home! Bring me the bootjack, Toby."

"I don't know about your being at home!" said Salina indignantly.

And it was evident that Toby did not know about bringing the bootjack.

"I suppose Toby has told you the news? Awful news! a fearful dispensation of Providence! Pepperill came in this afternoon and confirmed it. We thought he had deserted, but it appears he had only got lost in the woods. He reports some dead bodies in a ravine, and his account tallies very well with Toby's. We'll wear mourning, of course, Sallie."

Lysander stroked his chin. Mrs. Lysander tapped the floor with her impatient foot, gnawed her lip, and scowled.

"Come, my dear!" said the captain coaxingly, "we may as well understand each other. Times is changed. I tell ye, I'm going to be one of the big men under the new government. Toby, why don't you bring that bootjack?"

Lysander swung his chair around towards Salina. She turned hers away from him, still knitting her brows and gnawing that disdainful lip.

"Now what's the use, Sal? Since the way is opened for us to live together again, why can't you make up your mind to it, let bygones be bygones, and begin life over again? You'll be a general's wife by-and-by. I shall be off fighting the battles of my country, and you'll be proud to hear of my exploits."

Salina was touched. Strange as it may seem, she loved this worthless Lysander. She hated him for the misery he had caused her; she was exceedingly bitter against him; yet love lurked under all. Her scornful lip quivered, and there was a convulsive movement in her throat.

"Go away!" she exclaimed violently as he approached to caress her. "I am as unhappy as I can be! O if I had never seen you! Why do you come to torture me now?"

This passion pleased Lysander: it was a sign that her spirit was breaking. He caught her in his arms, called her pet names, laughed, and kissed her. And this woman, after all, loved to be called pet names and kissed.

"Toby, you devil!" roared Lysander, "why don't you bring that bootjack?"

The old negro stood behind the door with the bootjack in his hand, furious, ready to hurl it at the captain's head. He hesitated a moment, then turned discreetly, and flung it out of the kitchen window.

"Ain't a bootjack nowars in de house, sar."

"Then come here yourself."

And the gay captain made a bootjack of the old negro.

"Now shut up the house and go to bed," he said, dismissing him with a kick.

After Toby had retired and Salina had wiped her eyes, and Lysander had got his feet comfortably installed in the old clergyman's slippers, the long-estranged couple grew affectionate and confidential.

"Law, Sallie!" said the captain caressingly, "we can be as happy as two pigs in clover!" And he proceeded to interpret in plain prosaic detail those blissful possibilities expressed by the choice poetic figure.

It was evident to Salina that all his domestic plans were founded on

the supposition that the slippers he had on were the dead man's shoes he had been waiting for. Was she shocked by this cold, atrocious spirit of calculation? At first she was; but since she had begun to pardon his faults she could easily overlook that. She, who had lately been so spiteful and bitter, was now all charity towards this man. Even the image of her blind and aged father faded from her mind; even the pure and beautiful image of her sister grew dim, and the old, revivified attachment became supreme. Shall we condemn the weakness? Or shall we pity it rather? So long her affections had been thwarted!

"Oh yes! I do think we can be happy," she said, "if you will only be kind and good to me. If not here, why then somewhere else, for place is of no consequence—all I want is love."

"Ah!" said Lysander, knocking the ashes from his cigar, "but I have a fancy for this place. And what should we leave it for?"

"Because—you know—there is no certainty—I believe father is alive yet, and well."

"Not unless Toby lied to me! Did he?"

"Psh! you can't place any reliance on what Toby says," evasively.

"But I tell you Pepperill confirms his report about the dead bodies in the ravine! Now what do you know to the contrary?"

Lysander appeared very much excited, and a quarrel was imminent. Salina dreaded a quarrel. She broke into a laugh.

"The truth is, Toby did fool you. He couldn't help bragging to me about it."

Oh, Toby, Toby! that little innocent vanity of yours is destined to cost you, and others besides you, very dear! Lysander sprang upon his feet; his eyes sparkled with rage. Salina saw that it was now too late to keep the secret from him; there was no way but to tell him all. She showed Virginia's note. Virginia and her father alive and safe—that was what maddened Lysander.

But where were they?

Salina could not answer that question, for the most she had been able to get out of Toby was only a vague hint that they were hidden somewhere in a cave.

"No matter!" said Lysander with a diabolical laugh, showing his clinched and tobacco-stained teeth. "I'll have the nigger licked! I'll have the truth out of him or I'll have his life!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOBY'S REWARD.

FILLED with disgust and wrath, Toby had obeyed the man who assumed to be his master, and gone to bed. But he was scarcely asleep when he felt somebody shaking him, and awoke to see bending over him, with smiling countenance, lamp in hand, Captain Lysander.

"What's wantin', sar?"

"I want you to do an errand for me, Toby," Lysander kindly replied.

"Wal, sar, I don'o', sar," said Toby, reluctant, sitting up in bed and rubbing his elbows. "You know I had a right smart tramp. I's a tuckered-out nigger, sar; dat's de troof."

"Yes, you had a hard time, Toby. But you'll just run over to the schoolhouse for me, I know. That's a good fellow!"

Toby hardly knew what to make of Lysander's extraordinarily persuasive and indulgent manner. He didn't know before that a Sprowl could smile so pleasantly, and behave so much like a gentleman. Then, the captain had called him a good fellow, and his African soul was not above flattery.

"You've only to hand this note to Lieutenant Ropes. And I'll give you something when you come back—something you don't get every day, Toby! Something you've deserved, and ought to have had long ago!" And Lysander, all smiles, patted the old servant's shoulder.

This was too much for Toby. He laughed with pleasure, got up, pulled on his clothes, took the note, and started off with alacrity, to convince the captain that he merited all the good that was said of him, and that indefinite "something" besides.

What could that something be? He thought of many things by the way: a dollar; a knife; a new pair of boots with red tops, such as Lysander himself wore—which last item reminded him of the bootjack he had been used for, and the kick he had received.

He stopped in the street, his wrath rising up again at the recollection. "Good mind ter go back, and not do his old arrant." But then he thought of the smiles and compliments, and the promised reward. "Somefin' kinder decent 'bout dat mis'ble Sprowl, 'long wid a heap o' mean tings, arter all!" And he started on again.

Lysander's note was in these words:—

"Leiutent Ropes Send me with the bearrer of This 2 strappin felloes capble of doin a touhgh Job."

This letter was duly signed and duly delivered, and it brought the

"2 strappin felloes." The internal evidence it bore, that Lysander had not pursued his studies at school half as earnestly as he had of late pursued the schoolmaster, made no difference in the result.

The two strapping fellows returned with Toby. They were raw recruits, who had travelled a long distance on foot in order to enlist in the Confederate ranks. They had an unmistakable foreign air. They called themselves Germans. They were brothers.

"All right, Toby!" said Lysander, well pleased. "What are you bowing and grinning at me for? O, I was to give you something!"

"If you please, sar," said Toby—wretched, deceived, cajoled, devoted Toby.

"Well, you go to the woodshed and bring the clothes-line for these fellows—to make a swing for the ladies you know—then I'll tell you what you're to have."

"Sartin, sar." And Toby ran for the clothes-line.

"Good old Toby. Now, what you have deserved so long, and what these stout Dutchmen will proceed to give you, is the eternalest licking you ever had in your life."

Toby almost fainted; falling upon his knees, and rolling up his eyes in consternation. Sprowl smiled. The "Dutchmen" grinned. Just then Salina darted into the room.

"Lysander! what are you going to do with that old man?"

She put the demand sharply, her short upper lip quivering, cheeks flushed, eyes flaming.

"I'm going to have him whipped."

"No, you are not. You promised me you wouldn't. You told me that if he would go to the Academy for you, and be respectful, you would forgive him. If I had known what you were sending for, he should never have left this house. Now send those men back, and let him go."

"Not exactly, my lady. I am master in this house, whatever turns up; I am this nigger's master, too."

"You are not; you never were. Toby has his freedom. He shall not be whipped!" And with a gesture of authority, and with a stamp of her foot, Salina placed herself between the kneeling old servant and the grinning brothers.

The captain laughed devilishly, and threw his arms about his wife (this time in no loving embrace), and seizing her wrists, held them, and nodded to the soldiers to begin their work.

They laid hold of Toby, still kneeling and pleading, bound his arms behind him with a cord, and then looked calmly at Lysander for instructions.

"Take him to the shed," said the captain. "One of you carry this light. You can string him up to a crossbeam. If you don't understand how that's done, I'll go and show you. He's to have twenty lashes to begin with, for lying to me. Then he's to be whipped till he tells where our escaped prisoners are hid in the mountains. You understand?"

"Ve unterstan," said the brothers coldly.

Toby groaned. They took hold of him and dragged him away.

"Now will you behave, my girl? A pretty row you're making. Ye see it's no use. I am master. The nigger 'll only get it worse for your interference."

Lysander looked insolently in his wife's face. It was livid.

"Hey?" he said. "One of your tantrums?"

He placed her on a chair. She was rigid; she did not speak; he would have thought she was in a fit but for the eyes which she never took off him—eyes fixed with deep, unutterable, deadly, despairing hate.

"I reckon you'll behave—you'd better!" he said, shaking his finger warningly at her as he retired backwards from the room.

She saw the door close behind him. She did not move: her eyes were still fixed on that door; heavy and cold as stone, she sat there, and gazed, with that same look of unutterable hate. Perhaps five minutes. Then she heard blows and shrieks. Toby's shrieks: he had no Carl now to rush in and cut his bands.

The twenty lashes for lying had been administered on the negro's bare back. Then Lysander put the question: Was he prepared to tell all he knew about the fugitives and the cave?

"O, pardon, sar! pardon, sar!" the old man implored, "I can't tell nuffin', dat am de troof!"

"Work away, boys," said Lysander.

Torture to the extent of ten lashes was applied; then once more the question was put. Gashed, bleeding, strung up by his thumbs to the crossbeam; every blow of the extemporised whips extorting from him a howl of agony; no rescue at hand; Lysander looking on with a merciless smile; the brothers doing their assigned work with merciless nonchalance; well might poor Toby cry out, in the wild insanity of pain—

"Yes, sar! I'll tell, I'll tell, sar!"

"Very good," said Lysander. "Let him breathe a minute, boys."

But in that minute Toby gathered up his soul again, dismissed the traitor Cowardice, and took counsel of his fidelity. Betray his good old master to these ruffians? Break his promise to Virginia, his oath to Cudjo and Pomp? No, he couldn't do that. He thought of Penn, who would certainly be hung if captured, and hung through his treachery!

"Now out with it," said Lysander. "All about the cave. And don't ye lie, for you'll have to go and show it to us when we're ready."

"I can't tell!" said Toby. "Dar ain't no cave! none't I knows about—dat's shore!"

This was of course a downright lie, but it was told to save from ruin those he loved, and I do not think it stands charged against his soul on the books of the recording angel.

"Ten more, boys," said Lysander.

"Oh, wait, wait, sar!" shrieked Toby. "Des guv me time to tink!"

He thought of ten lashes; ten more afterwards; and still another ten; for he knew the whipping would not cease until he either betrayed the fugitives or died; and every lash was to him an agony.

"Think quick," said Captain Sprowl.

Just then the door of the kitchen opened. Toby grasped wildly at that straw of hope. It broke instantly. The comer was Salina. She had had the power to betray him, but not the power to save. She stood with folded arms, and smiled.

"I can't help you, Toby, but I can be revenged."

"Hello!" cried Lysander, with a start. "What smoke is that?"

She had left the door open, and a draught of air wafted a strange smell of burning cloth and pine wood to his nostrils.

"Nothing," replied Salina, "only the house is afire."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CARL MAKES AN ENGAGEMENT.

LYSANDER looked in through the doors and saw flames. She had put the lamp to the sitting-room curtains, and they had ignited the woodwork.

"Your own house," he said furiously. "What a fiend!"

"It was my father's house until you took possession of it," she answered. "Now it shall burn."

If he had not already considered that he had an interest at stake, that gentle remark reminded him.

"Boys! come quick! By ——! we must put out the fire!"

He rushed into the kitchen. The German brothers had come to execute his commands: whether to flay a negro or extinguish a fire was to them a matter of indifference; and they followed him, seizing pails.

Salina was prepared for the emergency. She held a butcher-knife concealed under her folded arms. With this she cut the cords above Toby's thumbs. It was done in an instant.

"Now take this and run! If they try to take you, kill them!"

She thrust the handle of the knife into his hand, and pushed him from the shed. Terrified, bewildered, weak, he seemed moving in a kind of nightmare. But somehow he got around the corner of the shed, and disappeared in the darkness.

The brothers saw him go. They were drawing water at the well, and handing it to Lysander in the house. But they had been told to hand water, not to catch the negro. So they looked placidly at each other, and said nothing.

The fire was soon extinguished; and Lysander, with his coat off, pail in hand, excited, turned and saw his "fiend" of a wife seated composedly in a chair, regarding him with a smile sarcastic and triumphant. He uttered a frightful oath.

"Any more of your tantrums, and I'll kill you!"

"Any more of yours," she replied, "and I'll burn you up. I can set fires faster than you can put them out. I don't care for the house any more than I care for my life, and that's precious little."

By the tone in which she said these words, level, determined, distinct, with that spice which compressed fury lends, Captain Lysander Sprowl knew perfectly well that she meant them.

The brothers looked at each other intelligently. One said something in German, which we may translate by the words "Incompatibility of temper;" and he smiled with dry humour. The other responded in the same tongue, and with a sleepy nod, glancing phlegmatically at Sprowl. What he said may be rendered by the phrase—"Caught a Tartar."

Although Lysander did not understand the idiom, he seemed to be quite of the Teutonic opinion. He regarded Mrs. Sprowl with a sort of impotent rage. If he was reckless, she had shown herself more reckless. Though he was so desperate, she had outdone him in desperation. He saw plainly that if he touched her now, that touch must be kindness, or it must be death.

"Have you let Toby go?"

"Yes," replied Salina.

"We can catch him," said Lysander.

"If you do you will be sorry. I warn you in season."

Since she said so, Lysander did not doubt but that it would be so. He concluded, therefore, not to catch Toby—that night. Moreover, he resolved to go back to his quarters and sleep. He was afraid of that wild cat; he dreaded the thought of trusting himself in the house with her. He durst not kill her, and he durst not go to sleep, leaving her alive. The Germans, perceiving his fear, looked at each other and grunted.

That grunt was German for "mean cuss." They saw through Lysander. After all were gone, Salina went out and called Toby. The old negro had fled for his life, and did not hear. She returned into the house, the aspect of which was rendered all the more desolate and drear by the marks of fire, the water that drenched the floor, the smoky atmosphere, and the dim and bluish lamp-light. The unhappy woman sat down in the lonely apartment, and thought of her brief dream of happiness, of this last quarrel which could never be made up, and of the hopeless, loveless, miserable future, until it seemed that the last drop of womanly blood in her veins was turned to gall.

The night passed, and morning dawned, and they who had slept awoke, and they who had not slept watched bitterly the quickening light which brought to them, not joy and refreshment, but only another phase of weariness and misery.

Captain Lysander Sprowl was observed to be in a savage mood that day. The cares of married life did not agree with him: they do not with some people. Because Salina had baffled him, and Toby had escaped, his inferiors had to suffer. He was sharp even with Lieutenant Ropes, who came to report a fact of which he had received information.

"Stackridge was in the village last night!"

"What's that to me?" said Lysander.

"The lieutenant-colonel——" whispered Silas. Sprowl grew attentive. By the lieutenant-colonel was meant no other than Augustus Bythewood, who had received his commission the day before. Well might Lysander, at the mention of him to whom both these aspiring officers owed everything, bend a little and listen. Ropes proceeded—"He feels a cussed sight badder now he believes the gal is in a cave somewhars with the schoolmaster than he did when he thought she was burnt up in the woods. He entirely approves of your conduct last night, and says Toby must be ketched, and the secret licked out of him. In the meanwhile he thinks sumthin' can be done with Stackridge's family. Stackridge was home last night, and of course his wife will know about the cave. The secret might be frightened out on her, or, I swear!" said Silas, "I wouldn't object to using a little of the same sort of coercion you tried with Toby, and Bythewood wouldn't nuther. Only he mustn't be supposed to know anything about it."

Lysander's eyes gleamed. He showed his tobacco-stained teeth in a way that boded no good to any of the name of Stackridge.

"Good idee?" said Silas, with a coarse and brutal grin.

"Thundering good!" said Lysander. Indeed, it just suited his ferocious mood. "Go yourself, lieutenant, and put it into execution."

"There's one objection to that," replied Silas, thrusting a quid into his cheek. "I know the old woman so well. It's best that none of us in authority should be supposed to have a hand in't. Send somebody that don't know her, and that you can depend on to do the job up harnsome. How's them Dutchmen?"

"Just the chaps!" said Lysander, growing good-natured as the idea of whipping a woman developed itself to his appreciative mind.

The project was freely discussed, and in the hilarity of their hearts the two officers let fall certain words, like crumbs from their table, which a miserable dog chanced to pick up.

That miserable dog was Dan Pepperill, whose heart was so much bigger than his wit. He knew that mischief was meant towards Mrs. Stackridge. How could he warn her? The drums were already beating for company drill, and he despaired of doing anything for her, when by good fortune—or is there something besides good fortune in such things?—he saw one of his children approaching.

The little Pepperill came with a message from her mother. Dan heard it unheedingly, then whispered in the girl's ear—

"Go and tell Mrs. Stackridge her and the childern's invited over to our house this forenoon. Right away now! Partic'lar reasons, tell her!" added Dan, reflecting that ladies in Mrs. Stackridge's station did not visit those in his wife's without particular reasons.

The child ran away and Pepperill fell into the ranks, only to get repeatedly and severely reprimanded by the drill-officer for his heedlessness that morning. His mind was on the child and the errand on which he had sent her.

After company drill the brothers were summoned, and Lysander gave them secret orders. They were to visit Stackridge's house, seize Mrs. Stackridge, and compel her, by blows if necessary, to tell where her husband was concealed.

"You understand?" said the captain.

"Ve unterstan," said they drily.

Scarcely had the brothers departed, when a prisoner was brought in. It was Toby, who had been caught endeavouring to make his way up into the mountains.

"Now we've got the nigger, mabby we'd better send and call the Dutchmen back," said Silas Ropes.

"No, no!" said Lysander through his teeth. "'Twon't do any harm to give the jade a good dressing down. I wish every man, woman, and child that shrieks for the old rotten Union could be served in the same way."

Having set his heart on this little indulgence, Sprowl could not easily be persuaded to give it up. It was absolutely necessary to his peace of mind that somebody should be flogged.

In the meantime the recaptured negro was taken to the guard-house. There he found a sympathising companion. It was Carl. To him he told his story, and showed his wounds, the sight of which filled the heart of the lad with rage, and pity, and grief.

"Vot sort of Tutchmen vos they?" Toby described them. Carl's eyes kindled. "I shouldn't be very much surprised," said he, "if they vos—no matter!"

Lieutenant Ropes arrived, bringing into the guard-house a formidable cat-o'-nine-tails.

"String that nigger up," said Silas.

Ropes was not the man to await patiently the issue of the woman-whipping while here was a chance for a little private sport. He remembered how Toby had got away from him once—that he too owed him a flogging. Debts of this kind, if no others, Silas delighted to pay, and accordingly the negro was strung up. It was well for the lieutenant that Carl had irons on his wrists.

The sound of the poor old man's groans—the sight of his gashed, oozing, and inflamed back, bared again to the whip—was to Carl unendurable. But as it was not in his power to obey the impulse of his soul—to spring for a musket and slay that monster of cruelty, Ropes, on the spot—he must try other means, perhaps equally unwise and desperate, to save Toby from torture.

"Vait, sir, if you please, vun leetle moment: I have a vord or two to shpeak. I know petter as he does about the cave; I vos there," he cried out boldly.

"Hey? You offer yourself to be whipped in this old nigger's place?" said Ropes.

"Not vair much," replied Carl. "I can go mit you or anypody you vill send, and show vair the cave is. I remember. But if you vill have me vipped, I shouldn't be vair much surprise if that vould make me to forget. Vippins," he added significantly, "is very pad for the memory."

"You mean to say if you are licked, then you won't tell?"

"That ish the idea I vished to confey."

"We'll see about that." Silas laughed. "In the meantime we'll try what can be got out of this nigger."

Toby, who had had a gleam of hope, now fell again into despair. Just then Captain Sprowl came in.

"Hold! What are you doing with that nigger?"

Silas explained, and Carl repeated his proposal. Lysander caught eagerly at it. He remembered Salina's warning, and was glad of any excuse to liberate the old negro.

"You promise to take me to the cave?" Carl assented. "Why, then, lieutenant, that's all we want, and I order this boy to be set free."

"This boy" was Toby, who was accordingly let off, to his own inexpressible joy and Ropes's infinite disgust.

"If Carl he take de responsumbility to show de cave, dat ain't my fault. 'Sides, that boy am bright, he am; de secesh can't git much de start o' him!"

Thus the old negro congratulated himself on his way home. At the same time Carl, still in irons, was saying to himself—

"So far so goot. If they had vipped Toby, two things vould be vair pad—the vipping, for one, and he vould have told, for another. But I have made vun promise. It vas a pad promise, and a pad promise is petter proken as kept. But if I preak it they vill preak my head. Vot shall I do?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CAPTAIN LYSANDER'S JOKE.

SINCE the time when she lost her best feather-bed and her boarder, the worthy Widow Sprowl had suffered serious pecuniary embarrassment. She missed sadly the regular four dollars a week, and the irregular gratuities, she had received from Penn. So much secession had cost her, without yielding as yet any of its promised benefits. The Yankees had not stepped up with the alacrity expected of them and thrust their servile necks into the yoke of their natural masters. The slave trade was not re-opened. Niggers were not yet so cheap that every poor widow could, at a trifling expense, provide herself with several, and grow rich on their labour. In the pride of seeing her son made what she called a "capting," and in the hope of enjoying some of the golden fruits of his valour, she had given him her last penny, and received up to the present time not a penny from him in return.

So it happened that the sugar-bowl and tea-canister were often empty, and the poor widow had no legitimate means of replenishing them. In this extremity she resorted to borrowing. She borrowed of everybody, and never repaid.

Thus, on the morning of the events related in the last chapter, she found herself in want of many things—tea, sugar, meal, beans, potatoes, snuff, and tobacco, for this excellent woman snuffed, "dipped," and smoked.

"Where shall I go and borry to-day?" said she, counting her patrons, and the number of times she had been to borrow of each, on her fingers. "Thar's Mis' Stackridge. I hain't been to her but oncet. I'll go agin, and carry the big basket."

With her basket on her arm, and an ancient brown bonnet (which had been black at the time of the demise of the late lamented Sprowl) on her head, and a multitude of excuses on her tongue, she set out, and walked to the farmer's house. This had one of those great shed openings through it so common in Tennessee. A door on the left, as you entered this covered space, led to the kitchen and living-room of the family. Here the widow knocked.

There was no response. She knocked again with the same result. Then she pulled the latch-string—for the door even of this well-to-do farmer had a latch-string. She entered. The house was deserted.

"Ain't to home, none of 'em, hey?" said the widow, peering about her with a disagreeable scowl. "House wan't locked, nuther. Wonder if Mis' Stackridge and her children have gone to the mountains too? And whar's old Aunt Deb?"

Her first feeling was that of resentment. What right had Mrs. Stackridge to be absent when she came to borrow? As she explored the pantry and closets, however, and became convinced that she was absolutely alone in a well-provisioned farm-house, her countenance lighted up with a smile.

"I can borry what I want jest exac'ly as well as if Mis' Stackridge war to home," thought the widow.

And she proceeded to fill her basket. She helped herself to a pan of meal, borrowing the pan with it.

"I'll fetch home the pan," said she, "when I do the meal"—exposing her craggy teeth with a grim smile. "If I don't before, I'm afeared Mis' Stackridge 'll haf to wait for't a considerable spell! What's in this box? Coffee! May as well take box and all. Bring back the box when I do the coffee. Wish I could find some tobacky somewhars—wonder whar they keep their tobacky!"

Now the excellent creature did not indulge in these liberties without some apprehension that Mrs. Stackridge might return suddenly and interrupt them. Perhaps she had not followed Mr. Stackridge to the mountains. Perhaps she had only gone into the village to buy shoes for her children, or to call on a neighbour. "If she should come back and ketch me at it—why, then I'll tell her I'm only jest a borryin', and see what she'll do about it. The prop'ty of these yer durned Union-shriekers is all gwine to be confisticated, and I reckon I may as well take my sheer when I can git it. Thar's a paper o' black pepper, and I'll take it jest as

tis. Thar's a jar o' lump butter—wish I could tote jar and all!—have some of the lumps on a plate anyhow!"

She had soon filled her basket, and was regretting she had not brought two or a larger one, when a handsome new tin pail, hanging in the pantry, caught her eye. "Been wantin' jest sich a pail as that this long while!" And she proceeded to fill that also.

Just as she was putting the cover on she was very much startled by hearing footsteps at the door.

"Oh dear me! What shall I do? If it should be Mr. Stackridge! But it can't be him! If it's only Mis' Stackridge or one of the niggers I'll face it out! They won't das' to make a fuss, for they're Union-shriekers, and my son's capting in the Confederate army!"

Thump, thump, thump!—loud knocking at the door.

"My, it's visitors! Who can it be?" She set down her pail and basket. "I'll act jest as if I had a right here, anyhow!"

She was hesitating, when the string was pulled, and two strangers, stout, square-built, with foreign-looking faces, carrying muskets, and dressed in Confederate uniform, entered.

"Mrs. Stackridge?" said they, in a heavy Teutonic accent.

"Ye—ye—yes," stammered the widow, trying to hide the guilty basket and pail behind her skirts "What do you want of Mis' Stackridge?"

One of the strangers said to the other, in German, indicating the plunder—

"This is the woman. She is getting provisions ready to send to her husband in the mountains."

"Let us see what there is good to eat," said the other.

Mrs. Sprowl, although understanding no word that was spoken, perceived that the borrowed property formed the theme of their remarks.

"Have some?" she hastened to say with extreme politeness, as the Germans approached the provisions.

"Tank ye," said they, finding some bread and cold meat. And they ate with appetite, exchanging glances, and grunting with satisfaction.

"Oh, take all you want!" said the widow. "You're welcome to anything there is in the house, I'm shore!"—adding within herself, "I am so glad these soldiers have come! Now whatever is missing will be laid to them."

"You de lady of de house?" said the foreigners, munching.

"Yes, help yourselves!" smiled the hospitable widow.

"You Mrs. Stackridge?" they inquired more particularly.

"Yes; take anything you like!" replied the widow.

"Where your husband?"

"My husband! my poor dear husband! he has been dead these——"

She checked herself, remembering that the soldiers took her for Mrs. Stackridge. If she undeceived them, then they would know she had been stealing.

"Dead?" The Germans shook their heads and smiled. "No! He was here last night. He was seen. You take dese tings to him up in de mountain."

"Would you like some cheese?" said the embarrassed widow.

"Tank ye. Dis is better as rations."

Mrs. Sprowl returned to the pantry, in order to replace the provisions she had so generously given away, and prepared to depart with the basket and pail; inviting the guests repeatedly to make themselves quite at home, and to take what they could find.

"Wait!" said they. Each had a knee on the floor, and one hand full of bread and cheese. They looked up at her with broad, complacent, unctuous faces, smiling, yet resolute. And one, with his unoccupied hand, laid hold of the handle of the basket, while the other detained the pail. "You will tell us where is your husband," said they.

"Oh, dear me, I don't know! I'm a poor lone woman, and where my husband is I can't consaive, I'm shore!"

"You will tell us where is your husband," repeated the men; and one of them, getting upon his feet, stood before her at the door.

"He's on the mountain somewhars. I don't know whar, and I don't keer," cried the widow, excited. There was something in the stolid, determined looks of the brothers she did not like. "He's a bad man, Mr. Stackridge is! I'm a secessionist myself. You are welcome to everything in the house—only let me go now."

"You will not go," said the soldier at the door, "till you tell us. We come for dat."

On entering, they had placed their muskets in the corner. The speaker then took them, and handed one to his comrade. And now the widow observed that out of the muzzle of each protruded the butt-end of a small cowhide. Each soldier held his gun at his side, and laying hold of the said butt-end, drew out the long taper belly and dangling lash of the whip, like a black snake by the neck.

The widow screamed.

"It's all a mistake. Let me go! I ain't Mis' Stackridge!"

The soldiers looked at each other, muttered something in German, smiled, and replaced their muskets in the corner.

"You tell us where is your husband. Or else we whip you. Dat is our orders."

This they said in low tones, with mild looks and with a calmness which was frightful. The widow saw that she had to do with men who obeyed orders literally, and knew no mercy.

"I hain't got no husband. I ain't Mis' Stackridge. I'm a poor lone widder, that jest come over here to borry a few things, and that's all."

"Ve unterstan. You say shust now you are Mrs. Stackridge. Now you say not. Dat make no difruns. Ve know. You tell us where is your husband, or ve string you up."

This speech was pronounced by both the foreigners, a sentence by each, alternately. At the conclusion one drew a strong cord from his pocket, while the other looked with satisfaction at certain hooks in the plastering overhead, designed originally for the support of a kitchen pole, but now destined for another use.

"Don't you dast to tech me!" screamed the false Mrs. Stackridge. "I'm a secessionist myself, that hates the Union-shriekers wus'n you do, and I've got a son that's a capting, and a poor lone widder at that!"

"Dat we don't know. What we know is, you tell what we say, or we whip you. Dat's Captain Shprowl's orders."

"Capting Sprowl! That's my son—my own son! If he sent you, then it's all right."

"So we tink. All right."

And the soldiers, seizing her, tied her thumbs as Lysander had taught them, passed the cords over the hook as they had passed the clothes-line over the cross-beam the night before, and drew the shrieking woman's hands above her head, precisely as they had hauled up Toby's. They then turned her skirts up over her head, and fastened them. This also they had been instructed to do by Lysander.

"Now you vill tell?" said the phlegmatic Teutons, measuring out their whips.

"Go for my son! My son is Capting Sprowl!" gasped the stifled and terror-stricken widow.

"Dat trick won't do. You shpeak, or we shtrike."

"It is true, it is true! I am Mrs. Sprowl, and my husband is dead, and my son is Captain Sprowl, and a poor lone widder, that if you strike her a single blow he'll have you took and hung!"

"If he is your son, den by your son's orders we whip you. He vill not hang us for dat. You vill not tell? Den we give you ten lash."

Blow upon blow, shriek upon shriek, followed. The soldiers counted the strokes aloud, deliberately, conscientiously, as they gave them, "Vun, two, tree," &c., up to ten. There they stopped. But the screams did

not stop. The soldiers waited for a lull in the shrieks, then put once more the question—

"You tell now? Where is your husband? No? Den you git ten lash more. Always ten lash till you tell."

A storm of incoherent denial, angry threats, sobs, and screams, was the response. One of the soldiers drew her skirts over her head again, and gave another pull at the cords that hauled up her thumbs, while the other stood off and measured out his whip.

Just then the door opened, and Captain Sprowl looked in.

"How are you getting on, boys?"

The question was accompanied by an approving smile, which seemed to say, "I see you are getting on very well."

"We whip her once; we give her ten lash. She not tell."

"Very well. Give her ten more."

The widow struggled and screamed. Had she recognised her son's voice? Muffled as she was, he did not recognise hers. Nor was it surprising that, in the unusual posture in which he found her, he did not know her from Mrs. Stackridge. He stood in the door and smiled while the soldier laid on.

"Make it a dozen," he quietly remarked, "and smart ones, to wind up with!"

So it happened that, thanks to her son's presence, the screeching victim got two "smart ones" additional.

"Now uncover her face. Ease away on her thumbs a little. "I'll question her mys—— Good Lucifer!" exclaimed the captain, finding himself face to face with his own mother.

Twenty-two lashes and the torture of the strung-up thumbs had proved too much even for the strong nerves of Widow Sprowl. She fell down in a swoon.

Lysander, furious, whipped out his sword, and turned upon the soldiers. They quietly stepped back, and took their guns from the corner. He would certainly have killed one of them on the spot had he not seen by the glance of their eyes that the other would, at the same instant, as certainly have killed him.

"You scoundrels! you have whipped my own mother!"

"Captain," they calmly answered, "we opey orders."

"Fools!"—and Lysander ground his teeth—"you should have known!"

"Captain," they replied, "if you not know, how should we know? We never see dis woman pefore. We come. We find her taking provisions from de house. We say, 'She take dem to her husband in de mountains.' We say, 'You Mrs. Stackridge?' She say 'Yes' to everyting. We not

know she lie. We not know she steal. We not say, 'You somepody else.' We obey orders. We take and we whip her. You come in and say, 'Whip more.' We whip more. Now you say to us, 'Scoundrels!'—you say, 'Fools!' We say, 'Captain, it was your orders; we opey.'

Having by a joint effort at sententious English pronounced this speech, the brothers stood stolidly awaiting the result, while the captain, still gnashing his teeth, bent over the prostrate form of his mother.

"Bring some water and throw on her, you idiots!" he yelled at them. "Would you see her die?"

They looked at each other. "Water?" Yes, that was what was wanted. They remembered their practice of the previous evening. One found a wooden pail. The other emptied upon the floor the contents of the tin pail the widow had "borrowed." They went to the well. They brought water. "To throw on her?" Yes, that was what he said. And together they dashed a sudden drenching flood over the poor woman, as if the swoon were another fire to be extinguished.

These fellows obeyed orders literally—a merit which Lysander now failed to appreciate. He swore at them terribly. But he did not countermand his last order. Accordingly they proceeded stoically to bring more water. Lysander had got his mother's head on his knee, and she had just opened her eyes to look and her mouth to gasp, when there came another double ice-cold wave, blinding, stifling, drowning her. Too much of water hadst thou, poor lone widow!

Lysander let fall the maternal head, and bounded to his feet, roaring with wrath. The brothers, imperturbable, with the empty pails at their sides, stared at him with mute wonder.

"Captain, dat was your orders. You say, 'Pring vasser and trow on.' We pring vasser and trow on. Dat is all."

"But I didn't tell you to fetch pailfuls!"

This sentence rushed out of Lysander's soul like a rocket, culminated in a loud, explosive oath, and was followed by a shower of fiery curses falling harmless on the heads of the unmoved Teutons.

They waited patiently until the pyrotechnic rain ceased, then answered, speaking alternately, each a sentence, as if with one mind but with two organs—

"Captain, you hear. Last night vas de house afire. You say, 'Pring vasser.' We pring a little. Den you say to us, 'Tam you! why in brimstone you shtop?' And you say, 'Ven I tell you pring vasser, pring till I say shtop.' Vun time more to-day you say, 'Pring vasser,' and you never say shtop. You say, 'Trow on.' We trow on. Vat you say we do. You not say vat you mean, dat is mishtake for you."

It is not to be supposed that Lysander listened meekly to the end of this speech. He had caught the sound of voices without that interested him more; and, looking, he saw Mrs. Stackridge returning with her children.

The Pepperill young one had faithfully done her errand; and the farmer's wife, believing something important was meant by it, had hastened to accept the singular and urgent invitation. But, arrived at the poor man's shanty, she was astonished to find Mrs. Pepperill astonished to see her. They talked the matter over, questioned the child, and finally concluded that Daniel had said something quite different, which the child had misunderstood.

"Well," said Mrs. Stackridge, after sitting awhile, "I reckon I may as well be going back, for I've left only old Aunt Deb to home, and she's scar't to death to be left alone these times; thinks the secesh soldiers 'll kill her. But I tell her not to be afeared of 'em. I ain't!"

So this woman, little knowing how much real cause she had to be afraid, returned home with her family. When near the house she met Gaff and Jake, negroes belonging to the farm, who had been in the field at work, running towards her, in great terror, declaring that they heard somebody killing Aunt Deb.

"Nonsense!" said she, and in spite of their assurances and entreaties, she marched straight towards the door through which the captain saw her coming.

"Clear out!" said Lysander to the soldiers. "Go to your quarters. I'll have your case attended to!" This was spoken very threateningly. Then, as soon as they were out of hearing, he said to Mrs. Stackridge, "I'm sorry to say a couple of my men have been plundering your house. Them Dutchmen you just saw go out. Worse than that, my mother was going by, and she came in to save your stuff, and they, it seems, took her for you, and beat her 'most to death," said Lysander.

"Lordy massy!" said Mrs. Stackridge.

"Do help me! do take off my clo'es! a poor lone widder!" faintly moaned Mrs. Sprowl.

"When I got here," added the captain, "she had fainted, and they had used her basket to pack things in, as you see, and filled this pail, which they emptied afterwards, so as to bring water and fetch her to. Scoundrels! I'm glad they ain't native-born Southerners!"

"And where is Aunt Deb?" said Mrs. Stackridge, hastening to raise the widow up.

"I dono', I hain't seen her. Oh, dear, them villains!" groaned Mrs. Sprowl. "I was just comin' over to borry a few things, you know."

"Going by: she wasn't coming here," said Lysander.

"Going by," repeated the widow. "Oh, shall I ever get over it? Oh, dear me, I'm all cut to pieces! A poor forlorn widder, and my only son—oh, dear!"

"Her only son," cried Lysander in a loud voice, "couldn't get here in time to prevent the outrage. That's what she wants to say. I leave her in your care, Mrs. Stackridge. She was doing a neighbourly thing for you when she came in to stop the pillaging, and I'm sure you'll do as much for her."

And the captain retired, his appetite for woman-whipping cloyed for the present.

"Where *is* Aunt Deb?" repeated Mrs. Stackridge. "Aunt Deb!" she called, "where are you? I want you this minute!"

"Here I is!" answered a voice from the clouds, or at least from that direction.

It was the voice of the old negress, who had hid herself in the chambers, and now spoke through a stove-pipe hole from which she had observed all that was passing from the time when the widow entered with her empty basket.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MOONLIGHT EXPEDITION.

TOBY had been released. Mrs. Stackridge had been whipped by proxy, and had kept her husband's secret. Gad, the spy, was still unaccountably absent. These three sources of information were, therefore, for the time, considered closed; and it was determined to have recourse to the fourth, namely, Carl.

Here it should, perhaps, be explained that the Confederate government, informed of the position of armed resistance assumed by the little band of patriots, had immediately telegraphed orders to recapture the insurgents.

"Try the ringleaders by drum-head court-martial, and if guilty, hang them on the spot," said a second despatch.

These instructions were purposely made public, in order to strike terror among the Unionists. They were discussed by the soldiers, and reached the ears of Carl.

"Hang them on the spot." That meant Stackridge and Penn, and he knew not how many more. "And I," said Carl, "have agreed to show the vay to the cave!"

He was sweating fearfully over the dilemma in which he had placed himself, when a sergeant and two men came to conduct him to head-quarters.

"Now it begins," said Carl to himself, drawing a deep breath.

The irons remained on his wrists. In this plight he was brought into the presence of the red-faced colonel.

"I hate a cussed Dutchman!" said Lysander, who happened to be at head-quarters.

He had had experience, and his prejudice was natural.

The colonel poised his cigar, and regarded Carl sternly. The boy's heart throbbed anxiously, and he was afraid that he looked pale. Nevertheless, he stood calmly erect on his sturdy young legs, and answered the officer's frown with an expression of placid and innocent wonder.

"Your name is Carl," said the colonel.

"I sushpect that is true," replied Carl, on his guard against making inadvertent admissions.

"Carl what?"

"Minnevich."

"Minny-fish? That's a scaly name. And they say you are a scaly fellow. What have you got those bracelets on for?"

"That is vat I should pe very much glad to find out," said Carl, affectionately regarding his handcuffs.

"You are the fellow that enlisted to save the schoolmaster's neck, ain't you?"

"I suppose that is true too."

"Suppose? Don't you know?"

"I thought I knowed, for you told me so; but as they vas nunting for him aftervards to hang him, I vas convinced I vas mishtaken."

This quiet reply, delivered in the lad's quaint style, with perfect deliberation, and with a countenance shining with simplicity, was in effect a keen thrust at the perfidy of the Confederate officers. The colonel's face became a shade redder, if possible, and he frowningly exclaimed—

"And so you deserted!"

"That," said Carl, "ish not quite so true."

"What! you deny the fact?"

"I peg your pardon, it ish not a fact. I vas took prisoner."

"And do you maintain that you did not go willingly?"

"I don't know just vat you mean by villingly. Ven vun of them fellows puts his muzzle to my head and says, 'You come mit us, and make no noise or I plow out your prains,' I vas pervailed upon to go. I vas

more villing to go as I vas to have my prains spilt. If that is vat you mean by villing, I vas villing."

"Why did they take you prisoner?"

"Pecause. I vill tell you. Gad vas shleeping like thunder: you know vat I mean—shnoring. Nothing could make him vake up, so they let him shnore. But I vake up, and they say, I suppose, they must kill me or take me off, for if I vas left pehind I vould raise the alarm too soon."

"Well, where did they take you?"

Carl was silent a moment, then looking Colonel Derring full in the face, he said earnestly—

"They made me shvear I vould not tell."

"Minny-fish," said the colonel, "this won't do. The secret is out, and it is too late for you to try to keep it back. Toby betrayed it. Mrs. Stackridge has been arrested, and she has confessed that her husband and his friends are hid in a cave. We sent out a scout, who has come in and corroborated both their statements. Gad discovered the cave; but he has sprained his ankle. He describes the spot accurately, but he's too lame to climb the hills again. What we want is a guide to go in his place. Now, Minny-fish, here's a chance for you to earn a pardon and prove your loyalty. You promised Captain Sprowl—did you not?—that you would conduct him to the cave."

Carl, overwhelmed by the colonel's confident assertions, breathed a moment, then replied—

"I pelieve I vas making him some promise."

"Notwithstanding your oath that you would not tell?" said Lysander, eager to cross and corner him.

"To show the vay, that is not to tell," replied Carl. "I shvore I vould not tell, and I shall not tell. But if you vill go mit me to the cave, I vill go mit you and take you. Then I keep my promise to you and my oath to them. You see, I did not shvear not to take you," he added, with a smile.

With a smile on his face, but with profound perturbations of the soul. For he saw himself sinking deeper and deeper into this miry difficulty, and how he was to extricate himself without dragging his friends down was still a terrible enigma.

"I believe the boy is honest," said Derring. "Sergeant, have those irons taken off. Captain Sprowl, you will manage the affair, and take this boy as your guide. I advise you to trust him. But until he has thoroughly proved his honesty, keep a careful eye on him, and if you become convinced that he is deceiving you, shoot him down on the spot—shoot him

on the spot," repeated the colonel impressively. "You both understand that. Do you, Minny-fish?"

"I vas never shot," said Carl, "but I sushpect I know vat shooting is." And he smiled again, with trouble in his heart that would have quite disconcerted a youth of less nerve and phlegm.

"Well," said Captain Sprowl, "if you don't you will know, if you undertake to play any of your Dutch tricks with me!"

"Oh, sir!" said Carl humbly, "if I knowed any trick I vouldn't ever think of playing it on you, you are so very shmart!"

"How do you know I am?" said Lysander, who felt flattered, and thought it would be interesting to hear the lad's reasons, for neither he nor any one present had perceived the craft and sarcasm concealed under that simple, earnest manner.

"How do I know you are shmart? Pecause," replied Carl, "you have such a pig head. And such a pig nose. And such a pig mouth. That shows you are a pig man."

This was said with an air of intense seriousness, which never changed amid the peals of laughter that followed. Nobody suspected Carl of an intentional joke; and the round-eyed, innocent surprise with which he regarded the merriment added hugely to the humour of it. Everybody laughed except Lysander, who only grimaced a little to disguise his chagrin. This upstart officer was greatly disliked for his conceited ways, and it was not long before the "Dutch boy's compliments" became the joke of the camp, and wherever Lysander appeared some whisper was sure to be heard concerning either the "pig mouth" or "pig nose" of that truly "pig man."

As for Carl, he had something far more serious to do than to laugh. How to circumvent the designs of these men? That was the question.

In the first place, it is necessary to state that his conscience acquitted him entirely of all obligations to them or their cause. He was no secessionist. He had enlisted to save his benefactor and friend. He had said, "I will give you my services if you will give that man his life." They had immediately afterwards broken the contract by seeking to kill his friend, and he felt that he no longer owed them anything. But they held *him* by force, against which he had no weapon but his own good wit. This, therefore, he determined to use, if possible, to their discomfiture, and the salvation of those to whom he owed everything. But how?

He had saved Toby from torture and confession by promising what he never intended literally to perform.

Once more in the guard-house, retained a prisoner until wanted as a guide, he reasoned with himself thus:—

"If I do not go, then they vill make Gad go, lame or no lame, and he vill not be half so lucky to show the wrong road as I can be"—for Carl never suspected that what had been said with regard to Mrs. Stackridge's arrest and confession, and Gad's successful reconnoissance and return, was all a lie framed to induce him to undertake this very thing. "And if I did not make pelieve I vas villing to go, then they vould not give me my hands free, and some chances for myself. I think there vill be some chances. But Sprowl is to watch, and be ready to shoot me down?" He shook his head dubiously, and added, "That is vat I do not like quite so vell!"

He remained in a deep study until dusk. Then Captain Sprowl appeared, and said to him—

"Come! you are to go with me."

Carl's heart gave a great bound; but he answered with an air of indifference—

"To-night?"

"Yes. At once. Stir!"

"I have not quite finished my supper; but I can put some of it in my pockets, and be eating on the road." And he added to himself, "I am glad it is in the night, for that vill be a very good excuse if I should be so misfortunate as not to find the cave!"

"Here," said Lysander imperiously, giving him a twist and push—"march before me! And fast! Now, not a word unless you are spoken to; and don't you dodge unless you want a shot."

Thus instructed, Carl led the way. He did not speak, and he did not dodge. One circumstance overjoyed him. He saw no signs of a military expedition on foot. Was Lysander going alone with him to the mountains? "I sushpect I can find some trick for him, shmart as he is!" thought Carl.

They left the town behind them. They took to the fields; they entered the shadow of the mountains, the western sky above whose tops was yet silvery bright with the shining wake of the sunset. A few faint stars were visible, and just a glimmer of moonlight was becoming apparent in the still twilight gloom

"We are going to have a quiet little adventure together!" chuckled Carl. One thing was singular, however. Lysander did not tamely follow his lead: on the contrary, he directed him where to go; and Carl saw, to his dismay, that they were proceeding in a very direct route towards the cave.

"Never mind! Ven ve come to some convenient place maybe something vill happen," he said consolingly to himself.

Then suddenly consternation met him, as it were, face to face. The enigma was solved. From the crest of a knoll over which Lysander drove him like a lamb, he saw, lying on the ground in a little glen before them, the dark forms of some forty men.

One of these rose to his feet and advanced to meet Lysander. It was Silas Ropes.

"All ready?" said Sprowl.

"Ready and waiting," said Silas.

"Well, push on," said the captain. "We'll go to the dead bodies in the ravine first. Where's Pepperill?"

"Here," replied Ropes; and at a summons Dan appeared.

Carl's heart sank within him. Toby in the guard-house had told him about the dead bodies, and he knew that they were not far from the cave. He was aware, too, that Pepperill knew far more than one of such shallow mental resources and feeble will, wearing that uniform, and now in the power of these men, ought to know.

There in the little moonlit glen they met and exchanged glances—the sturdy, calm-faced boy, and the weak-kneed, trembling man. Pepperill had not recovered from the terror with which he had been inspired when summoned to guide a reconnoitring party to the ravine. But he had not yet lisped a syllable of what he knew concerning the cave. Carl gave him a look, and turned his eyes away again indifferently. That look said, "Be vair careful, Dan, and leave a good deal to me. And Dan, man as he was, felt somehow encouraged and strengthened by the presence of this boy.

"Now, Pepperill," said Sprowl, "can you move ahead and make no mistake?"

"I kin try," answered Pepperill dismally. "But it's a heap harder to find the way in the night so; durned if 'tain't."

"None o' that, now, Dan," said Ropes, "or you'll git sunthin' to put spirit inter ye!"

Dan made no reply, but shivered. The mountain air was chill, the prospect dreary. Close by, the woods, blackened by the recent fire, lay shadowy and spectral in the moon. Far above, the dim summits towards which their course lay whitened silently. There was no noise but the low murmur of these men, bent on bloody purposes. No wonder Dan's teeth chattered.

As for Carl, he killed a mosquito on his cheek, and smiled triumphantly.

"You got a shlap, you varmint!" he said, as if he had no other care on his mind than the insect's slaughter.

"Who told you to speak?" said Lysander sharply.

"Vas that shpeaking?" Carl scratched his cheek complacently. "I vas only making a little observation to the mosquito."

"Well, keep your observations to yourself!"

"That is vat I vill try to do."

The order to march was given. Lysander proceeded a few paces in advance, accompanied by Ropes and the two guides. The troops followed in silence, with dull, irregular tramp, filing through obscure hollows, over barren ridges crowned by a few thistles and mulleins, and by the edges of thickets which the fires had not reached. At length they came to a tract of the burned woods. The word "Halt!" was whispered. The sound of tramping feet had suddenly hushed, and the slender column of troops, winding like a dark serpent up the side of the mountain, became motionless.

"All right so far, Pepperill?"

"Wal, I hain't made nary mistake yet, cap'm."

Pepperill recognised the woods in which, when flying to the cave with Virginia, Penn, and Cudjo, they had found themselves surrounded by fires.

"How far is it now to your ravine?"

"Nigh on to half-a-mile, I reckon."

"Shall we go through these woods?"

"It's the nighest to go through 'em. But I s'pose we can git round if we try."

"The moon sets early. We'd better take the nearest way," said the captain. "Well, Dutchy"—for the first time deigning to consult Carl—"this route is taking us to the cave, too, ain't it?"

"Vair certain," said Carl, "pervided you go far enough, and turn often enough, and never lose the vay."

"That'll be your risk, Dutchy. Look out for the landmarks, so that when Pepperill stops you can keep on."

"I vill look out, but if they have been purnt up since I vas here, how vair vexing!"

The wood had been but partially consumed when the flames were checked by the rain. Many trunks were still standing, naked, charred, stretching their black despairing arms to the moon.

Through this scene of blackness and ruin, rendered gloomily picturesque by the moonlight, the men picked their way. Not a word was spoken; but occasionally a muttered curse told that some ill-protected foot had come in contact with live cinders, or that some unlucky leg had slumped down into a little fire mine, formed by roots of old dead stumps, eaten slowly away to ashes underground.

Carl had hoped that the woods would prove impassable, and that the party would be compelled to turn back. That would gain for him time and opportunity. But the men pushed on. "Vill nothing happen?" he said to himself, in despair at seeing how directly they were travelling towards the cave.

Pepperill, not daring to assume the responsibility of misleading the party, knew no better than to go stumbling straight on.

"I vish he vould shtumple and preak his shtupid neck!" thought Carl.

They emerged from the burned woods, and came out upon the ledges beyond, and now the lad saw plainly where they were. On the left, the deep and quiet gulf of shadow was the ravine. They had but to follow this up, he knew not just how far, to reach the cave. And still Pepperill advanced. Carl's heart contracted. He knew that the critical moment of the night, for him and for his fugitive friends, was now at hand.

"Do you see any landmarks yet?" Sprowl whispered to him.

"I can almost see some," answered Carl, peering earnestly over a moonlit bushy space. "Ve shall pe coming to them py and py."

"Do you know this ravine?"

"I remember some ravines. I shouldn't be vair much surprised if this vas vun of 'em."

"Look here," said Lysander. Carl looked, and saw a pistol-barrel. "Understand?"—significantly.

"Is it for me?" And Carl extended his hand ingenuously.

"For you?—yes." But instead of giving the weapon to the boy, he returned it to his pocket, with a smile the boy did not like.

"Ah, yes! a goot joke!" And Carl smiled too, his good-humoured face beaming in the moon.

At the same time he said to himself, "He hates me pecause I am Hapgood's friend, and he vill be much pleased to have cause to shoot me."

Just then Dan stopped. Lysander put up his hand as a signal. The troops halted.

"It's somewhars down in hyar, cap'm," Pepperill whispered.

"It's a horrid place!" muttered Sprowl.

"It ar so, durned if 'tain't!" said Dan discouragingly.

Before them yawned the ravine, bristling with half-burned saplings, and but partially illumined by the moon. The babble of the brook flowing through its hidden depths was faintly audible.

"See the bodies anywhere?" said Lysander.

"Can't see ary thing by this light," replied Dan. "But we can go down and find 'em."

Sprowl did not much fancy the idea of descending.

"It will be a waste of time to stop here," he said to Silas. "The live traitors are of more consequence than the dead ones. Supposing we go to the cave first, and come back and find the bodies afterwards. Have you got your bearings yet, Carl?"

"I am peginning," said Carl, staring about him with his hands in his pockets. "I think I vill have 'em soon."

Sprowl looked at him with suppressed rage. "How cussed provoking!" he muttered.

"It is provoking!" said Carl, looking at the moon.

"Well, make up your mind quick! What will you do?"

Then it seemed as if a bright idea occurred to Carl.

"I vill tell you. You go down and find the podies, and I vill be looking. Ven you come up again I shouldn't be surprised if I could see vair the cave is."

"Ropes," said Sprowl, "take a couple of men, and go down in there with Pepperill. I think it's best to stay with this boy."

This arrangement did not please Carl at all, but, as he could not reasonably complain of it, he said stoically, "Yes, it vill be petter so."

Ropes selected his two men, and left the rest concealed in the shadows of the thickets.

"If I could go up on the rocks there, I suppose I could see something," said Carl.

"Well, I'll go with you. I mean to give you a fair chance. Carl felt a secret hope. Once more alone with this villain, would not something interesting occur? "Wait, though!" said Sprowl, and he called a corporal to his side. "Come with us. Keep close to this boy. At the first sign of his giving us the slip put your bayonet through him."

"I will," said the corporal.

This was discouraging again. But Carl looked up at the captain and smiled—his good-humoured, placid smile.

"You do right. But you vill see I shall not give you the shlip. Now come, and be vair still."

In the meantime Pepperill, with the three rebels, descended into the ravine. The spot where the dead man and horse had been was soon found. But now no dead man was to be seen. The horse had been removed from the rocks between which his back was wedged, and rolled down lower into the ravine. A broad shallow hole had been dug there, as if to bury him. But the work had been interrupted. There was a shovel lying on the heap of earth.

"They've buried the poor cuss hyar," said Dan.

"We'll see." Ropes took the shovel. He threw up a little dirt, then gave the shovel to one of the soldiers. The moon shone full upon the place. The man dug a few minutes, and came to something which was neither rock nor soil. He pulled it up. It was a man's arm.

"You didn't guess fur from right this time, Dan! Scrape off a little more dirt and we'll haul up the carcass. Ketch holt, Dan!"

Dan caught hold. The body was dragged from the lonely resting-place to which it had been consigned. Parts of it, which had not been protected by the superincumbent bulk of the horse, were hideously burned. Ropes rolled it over on the back, and kicked it to knock off the dirt. He turned up the face in the moonlight—a frightful face! One side was roasted, and what was left of the hair and beard was full of sand.

But the features were still recognisable. The men started back with horror. They knew their comrade. It was the spy who had been sent out to watch the fugitives. It was "the sleeper," whom nought could waken more. It was Gad.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CARL FINDS A GEOLOGICAL SPECIMEN.

IN the meantime Carl ascended the mooonlit slope, with Sprowl's pistol on one side of him and the corporal's bayonet on the other. They were advancing cautiously towards the summit of the bushy ridge. Suddenly Carl stopped.

"Anything?" said Sprowl. Carl nodded, with a pleased and confident smile. "What?"

"You shall see vair soon. Shtoop low." He himself crouched close to the ground. The men followed his example. "Come a little more on. Now you see that rock?" Lysander saw it. "Vell, it is not there."

They crept forward a little farther. Then Carl stopped again, and said—

"You see that tree?"

"Which?"

"All alone in the moonshine." Lysander perceived it.

"Vell," said Carl, "it is not there."

Again they advanced, and again he paused and pointed.

"You see them little saplings?" Lysander distinguished them revealed against the sky.

"Vell," said Carl, "it is not there neither."

He was crawling on again, when Sprowl seized his collar.

"What the devil do you mean?—if I see these things!"

Carl turned on his side, smiled intelligently, and, beckoning the captain

to bring his ear close, put his lips to it, covered them with his hand, with an air of secrecy, and whispered hoarsely—

"LANDMARKS!"

"Ah! well!" said Lysander, suffering him to proceed.

Carl crept slowly, raising his head at every moment to observe. The bayonet came behind; the captain continued at his side. "The further I take these villains from the others the petter," thought he. At length he came in view of the high ledge upon which Penn had discovered Cudjo at his idolatrous devotions on the night of the fire. The moon was getting behind the mountain, and there were dark shadows beneath this ledge. Though he should travel a mile he might not find a more suitable spot to locate his fictitious cave. He hesitated, considered well, then gently tapped Lysander's arm.

"You see vair the rock comes down? And some pushes just under it? Vell, the cave is behind the pushes, ven you find it!" Which was indeed true.

Lysander crept a few paces nearer, stealthily, flat on his belly, with his head slightly elevated, like a dark reptile gliding over the moonlit ground.

"Now is my time!" thought Carl. His heart beat violently. He raised himself on his knees, preparing to spring. Lysander was at least ten feet in advance of him, and he thought he would risk the pistol. "I run—he fires—he vill miss me—I shall get avay." But the corporal? Just then he felt a piercing pressure in his side. It was the corporal nudging him with the bayonet to make him lie down

"I vas shust going a little nearer."

The corporal seemed satisfied with the explanation; but as the boy advanced on his hands and knees, he advanced close behind him—holding the bayoneted gun ready for a thrust.

Just then occurred a circumstance which seemed almost providentially designed to favour the boy's strategy. Upon the ledge appeared two human figures, male and female, touched by the moonlight, and defined against the sky. They remained but a moment on the summit, then began to descend in the shadow of the ledge.

If Sprowl had any doubts on the subject of the cave, he was now entirely satisfied.

As for Carl, it was he who had been most astonished by the phenomenon. No sooner had he invented a cave than two phantoms made their appearance, and walked into it! The illusion was so perfect that he himself was almost deceived by it. Only for an instant, however. Continuing to gaze, he had another glimpse of the apparitions, when, having

merely passed behind the bushes, they came out beyond them, in the direction of the real cave, and were lost once more in shadow. Lysander could not see this very important movement, and the corporal was too intently occupied in watching Carl to observe anything else.

The captain got behind the shelter of a cluster of thistles, and beckoned for the two to approach.

"Corporal," said he, "hurry back and tell Ropes to bring up his men. I'll wait here."

The corporal crawled off.

Carl heard the order, saw the movement, and felt thrilled to the heart's core with joy. He was now alone with the captain. And he was no longer unarmed. In creeping towards the thistles, he had laid his hand on a wonderful little stone. Somehow, his fingers had closed upon it. It was about the size of an apple, slightly flattened, rough, and heavy. "I thought," he said afterwards, "if anything vas to happen, that stone might be vorth to me."

"You vas going to shoot me," said Carl.

"And so I would if you hadn't brought us to the cave."

"That means," thought Carl, "he vill kill me yet if he can, ven he finds out." He observed also, that Sprowl, lying on his left side, had his right hand free, and near the pocket where his pistol was. It was not yet too late for him to be shot if he attempted an escape without first attempting something else. The violent beating of his heart recommenced. He felt a strange tremor of excitement thrilling through every nerve. His hand still held the pebble, covering and concealing it as he leaned forward on the ground. He crept a little nearer Lysander.

"The vay they go into the cave," he said, "is vair queer."

"How so?" asked the captain.

They were facing each other. Carl drew still a little nearer, and raised himself slightly on the hand that grasped the geological specimen.

"I promised to take you in. I vill take you in on vun condition."

"Condition?" repeated Lysander.

"That is vat I said. Vun leetle condition. Let me vishper."

Carl put up his left hand as if to cover the communication he was about to breathe into Lysander's ear.

"The condition—IS THIS!"

As he uttered the last words, he seized Lysander's wrist with his left hand, and at the same instant, with a stroke rapid as lightning, smote him on the temple with the stone.

All this, being interpreted, meant, "I take you to the cave on the condition that you go as my prisoner." Thus Carl designed to keep his

promise. As he struck he sprang up, to be ready for any emergency. He had expected a struggle, an outcry. He never dreamed that he could strike a man dead with a single blow!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CARL KEEPS HIS ENGAGEMENT.

OF the two forms that had been seen on the ledge, the female was not Virginia, and the other was not Penn, as Sprowl had imagined.

Filled with hatred for her husband—filled with shame and disgust, too, on hearing how he had caused his own mother to be whipped (for the secret was out, thanks to Aunt Deb at the stove-pipe hole), resolved in her soul never to forgive him, never even to see him again if she could help it, yet intolerably wretched in her loneliness, Salina had that afternoon taken Toby into her counsel.

"Toby, what are we to do?"

"Dat's what I do'no' myself!" the sore old fellow confessed; even his superior wisdom, usually sufficient (in his own estimation) for the whole family, failing him now. "When it comes to lickin' white women and 'spec'able servants, ain't nobody safe. I's glad ol' massa and Miss Jinny's safe up dar in de cave, and I on'y wish we war safe up dar too."

"Toby," said Salina, "we will go there. Can you find the way?"

"Reckon I kin," said Toby, delighted at the proposal.

They set out early. They succeeded in reaching the woods without exciting suspicion. But, after the best they could do, daylight was gone when they came to the ravine, and Toby could not find the place where he had previously crossed. He passed beyond it. Then they crossed at random in the easiest place. Once on the side where the cave was, Toby decided that they were above it; and, owing to the steepness of the banks, it was necessary to go round over the rocks, at a short distance from the ravine, in order to reach the shelf behind the thickets. It was in making this movement that they had been seen to descend the ledge and pass behind the bushes at its base.

"Now," said Toby, "you jes' wait while I makes a reckonoyster!"

Salina, weary, sat down in the shadow of a juniper-tree.

Toby made his reconnoissance, discovered nothing, and returned. She, sitting still there, had been more successful. She pointed.

"What dar?" whispered Toby, frightened.

"There is somebody. Don't you see? By those shrub-like things."

"Dey ain't nobody dar!"—with a shiver.

"Yes, there is. I saw a man jump up. He is bending over something now, trying to lift it. It must be Penn, or some of his friends. Go softly, and see."

Toby, imaginative, superstitious, did not like to move. But Salina urged him, and something must be done.

"I—I's mos' afeard to! But dar's somebody, shore!"

He advanced, with eyes strained wide and cold chills creeping over him. What was the man doing there? What was he trying to lift and drag along the ground? It was the body of another man.

"Who dar?" said Toby.

"Be quiet. Come here!" was the answer.

"What! Carl! Carl! dat you? What you doin' dar? massy sakes!" said Toby.

"I've got a prisoner," said Carl.

"Dead! O de debil!" said Toby.

"I've knocked him on the head a little, but he is not dead," said Carl. "Be still, for there's forty more vithin hearing!"

Toby, with mouth agape and hands on knees, crouching, looked in the face of the lifeless man. That jaunty moustache, with the blood from the nostrils trickling into it, was unmistakable.

"Dat Sprowl!" ejaculated the old negro, with horrified recoil.

"He won't hurt you! Take holt! Ropes is coming mit his men!"

"Le' 'm drap, den. Wha' ye totin' on him fur?"

Carl had quite recovered from his stupefaction. His wits were clear again. But instead of stopping to explain anything, he once more, and alone, lifted the head and shoulders of the limp man, and bore him along.

"Toby, who is that?"

"Dat am Miss Salina."

Carl asked no explanations.

"Vimmen scream sometimes. Tell her she is not to scream. You get her handkersheaf. And do not say it is Shprowl."

"Who—what is it?" Salina inquired.

"Our Carl! don't ye know?" said Toby. "He's got one ob dem secesh he's knocked on de head."

"Has he killed him?"

"Part killed him, and part took him prisoner—about six o' one and half-a-dozen tudder. He say you's 'specfully 'quested not to scream, and wants your hank'cher."

"What does he want of it?"—giving it.

"Dat he best know hisself; but if my 'pinion am axed, I should say to wipe de fellah's nose wiv."

Having delivered this profound judgment, Toby carried the handkerchief to Carl, who spread it over the wounded man's face.

"That prevents her seeing him, and prevents his seeing the vay to the cave."

"Who eber knowed you's sech a powerful smart chil'?" said old Toby, amazed.

As Toby had never been conscious what stuff there was in Carl, so he had never known how much he really loved, admired, and relied upon him. He stood staring at him there in the moonlight as if he then for the first time perceived what a little prodigy he was.

"Take holt, why don't you?" said Carl.

And this time Toby obeyed: he secretly acknowledged the authority of a master.

"Sartin, sah!"

He had checked himself when on the point of saying "Massa Carl;" but the respectful "sah" slipped from his tongue before he was aware of it.

In the cave the usual fire was burning, by the light of which only Virginia and her father were to be seen. Salina had followed Carl, and the sisters fell into each other's arms.

"Who is with you?" said the old man. "Toby? and Carl?"

"I vants Mr. Hapgood, or Pomp, or Cudjo!" said Carl, laying down his burden.

"They have gone to bury the man in the ravine," said Virginia.

Carl opened great eyes. "The man in the ravine? That's vair Ropes and the soldiers have gone."

"What soldiers?—Who is this?"

"This is their valiant captain! I am vair sorry, ladies, but I have given him a leetle nose-pleed. Some vater, Toby! Your handkersheaf, ma'am, and vair much obliged."

Salina stooped to take the handkerchief. A flash of the fire shone upon the uncovered face. The eyes opened; they looked up, and met hers looking down.

"Lysander!"

"Sal, is it you? Where am I, anyhow?" And the husband tried to raise himself. "Carl, what's this?"

"Don't be violent!" said Carl, gently laying him down again, "and I vill tell you. I vas your prisoner, and I vas showing you the cave. Vell, this is the cave!"

"Didn't somebody knock me on the head?"

"I shouldn't be vastly surprised if somepody *did* knock you on the head."

"Was it you?"

"I rather sushpect it vas me."

Lysander rubbed his bruised temple feebly, looking amazed.

"But how came *she* here?"

"It vas she and Toby ve saw going into the cave."

"What's that?" (To Toby, bringing a gourd.)

"It is vater: you can trink a little. You feel pretty sound in your vitals, don't you? I vas careful not to hurt your vitals," said Carl kindly, raising Sprowl's head and holding the water for him to drink.

Lysander, ungrateful, instead of drinking, started up with sudden fury, struck the gourd from him with one hand, and thrust the other into the pocket where his pistol was at last accounts.

"Vat is vanting?" Carl inquired complacently.

Lysander, fumbling in vain for his weapon, muttered, "Vengeance!"

"Vair good," said Carl; "ve vill discuss the question of vengeance, if you like." And, drawing the pistol from *his* pocket, he coolly presented it at Sprowl's head. "Vat for you dodge?"

Lysander felt for his sword, found that gone also, and muttered again, "Villain!"

"Did somepody say somepody is a villain?" remarked Carl. "I should not be vair much surprised if that vas so. Villains nowdays is cheap. But you must keep quiet. Do you remember how I vas kept quiet ven I vas *your* prisoner? I had pracelets on? And do you remember I vas putting some supper in my pocket ven you took me to show you the cave? Vell, I make von great mishtake; instead of supper, vat I vas putting in my pocket was them vair pracelets!"

And Carl produced the handcuffs. At that moment Penn and Cudjo arrived, and Lysander, observing them, submitted to his fate with beautiful resignation. The irons were put on, and Carl mounted guard over him with the pistol.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LOVE IN THE WILDERNESS.

CUDJO was highly exasperated to find strangers in the cave. He became quickly reconciled to the presence of Virginia's sister, but not to that of Lysander. To pacify him, Carl made him a present of the sword which he had removed from the captain's noble person on arriving. Cudjo received the weapon with unbounded delight, and proceeded to adjust the belt to his own Ethiopian waist. It mattered little with him that he got the scabbard on the wrong side of his body; a sword was a

sword, and he wore it in awkward and ridiculous fashion, strutting up and down in the fire-lighted cave, to the envy and disgust of old Toby, the rage of Lysander, and the amusement of the rest.

Penn meanwhile related to his friends his evening's adventures. He had gone down to the ravine with the negroes to bury the horse and his dead rider. He was keeping watch while they worked; the man was buried, and they were digging a pit for the animal, when they discovered the approach of the soldiers, and retired to a hiding-place close by. "We waited patiently," said Penn, "until they finished their work, and climbed up out of the ravine; then we climbed up after them. We found a large number of soldiers lying under some bushes, and crept near enough to hear what they were saying. They were going to take the cave by surprise, and an order had just come for them to move farther up the mountain. They set off with scarcely any noise, and disappeared among the bushes and shadows. Pomp is on their trail now; he has his rifle with him, and it may be heard from if he sees them change their course and approach too near the cave."

Penn had come in for his musket. It was the same that had fallen from the hands of the man Griffin at the moment when that unhappy rebel was in the act of charging bayonet at his breast. Assuring Virginia, who could not conceal her alarm at seeing him take it from its corner, that he was merely going out to reconnoitre, he left the cave.

He was gone several hours. At length he and Pomp returned together. The moon had long since set, but it was beautiful starlight; and, themselves unseen, they had watched carefully the movements of the soldiers.

"You would have laughed to have been in my place, Carl!" said Penn, laying his hand affectionately on the shoulder of his beloved pupil. "They besieged the ledge where your imaginary cave is for full two hours after I went out, apparently without daring to go very near it."

"I suppose," replied Carl, "they vas vaiting for me and the captain. It vas really too pad now for us to make them lose so much valuable time! But they will excuse Mishter Shprowl; his absence is unavoidable."

After besieging the imaginary cave as Penn had described, several of the Confederates, he said, at last ventured with extreme caution to approach it.

"And found," added Carl, "they had been made the victims of von leetle stratagem!"

"I suppose so, for an unusual stir took place amongst them."

"In searching for the entrance," laughed Pomp, leaning on his rifle, "they came close under a juniper-tree I had climbed into, and I could hear them cursing the little Dutchman——"

"I suppose that vas me," smiled the good-natured Carl.

"And the 'pig-headed captain' who had gone off with him."

"The pig-headed captain is this von"—indicating Sprowl. "But it is vair unjust to be cursing him, for it vas not his fault. It vas my legs and Toby's that conveyed him, and he had a handkersheaf over his face for a veil."

Carl then entered upon a full explanation of the circumstances which had led to Lysander's capture. His narrative was altogether so simple, so honest, so droll, that even the bitter Salina had to smile at it, while all the rest, the old clergyman included, joined in a hearty laugh of approval.

The daylight had now come, and Penn, who went out to take an observation, could discover no trace of the vanished rebels. But he heard a footstep, and felt a touch on his arm. Was it the beauty of the earth and sky that made him thrill with so sudden and sweet a sensation? It was Virginia, who leaned so gently on his arm that not the slight pressure of her weight, but rather the impalpable shock of bliss her very nearness brought, made him aware of her approach. Toby followed, supporting her along the shelf of rock—a dark cloud in the wake of that rosy and perfumed dawn.

"Oh, how delicious it is here!" said the voice, which, if we were to describe it from the lover's point of view, could be likened only to the songs of birds, the musical utterance of purest flutes, or the blowing of wild winds through those grand harp-strings, the mountain pines.

"It is—delicious!" he quiveringly answered, in his happy confusion blending *her* with his perception of the daybreak.

She inhaled deep draughts of the mountain air.

"How I love it! The breath of trees, and grass, and flowers is in it—those dear friends of mine that I pine for, shut up here in prison!"

"Do you?" said Penn vaguely, half wishing that he was a flower, a blade of grass, or a tree, so that she might pine for him.

"How long," spoke Virginia after a little pause, "do you imagine we shall have to stay here?"

"It is impossible to say," replied Penn, turning with reluctance to the more practical topic. "One would think that the government cannot leave us much longer subject to this atrocious tyranny. An army may be already marching to our relief. But it may be weeks, it may be months, and I am not sure," he added seriously, "but it may be years, before Tennessee is relieved."

"Why, that is terrible! Toby says that poor old man, Mr. Ellerton, who assisted you to escape, was caught and hung by some of the soldiers yesterday."

"I have no doubt but it is true. Although he had returned to his home, he was known to be a Unionist, and probably he was suspected of having aided us; in which case not even his white hairs could save him."

"But it is horrible! They have commenced woman-whipping. And Toby says a negro was hung up six times a couple of days ago, and afterwards cut to pieces, for saying to another negro he met, 'Good news; Lincoln's army is coming!' What is going to become of us, if relief doesn't arrive soon? Oh, to look at the beautiful world we are driven from by these wicked, wicked men!"

There was an indescribable pause; Virginia's eyes modestly fell, her face suffused with a blissful light, as if her soul saw some soft and exquisite dream; while Penn's bosom swelled with the long undulations of hope and transport. Toby still lingered in the entrance of the cave.

"Toby," said Penn, such a radiance flashing from his brow as the negro had never seen before, "my good Toby"—and what ineffable human sympathy vibrated in his tones!—"I wish you would go in and tell our friends that the enemy has quite disappeared: will you?"

"Yes, massa!" said Toby, a ray of that happiness penetrating even the old freedman's breast.

Toby went. Then an arm of manly strength, yet of all manly gentleness, stole about the waist of the girl, and drew her softly closer, closer; while something else, impalpable, ravishing, holy, drew her by a still more potent attraction; until, for the first time in her young and pure life, her mouth met another mouth with the soul's virgin kiss.

Not a word was spoken.

Then Penn held Virginia before him, looked deep into her eyes, and said, with a strange tremor of lip and voice—using the gentle speech of the Friends, into which old familiar channel his thoughts flowed naturally in moments of strong feeling—

"Wherever this dear face smiles upon me, there is my sunshine. I must be very selfish; for notwithstanding all the dangers and discomforts by which I see thee and thy father surrounded, the hours we have passed together here have been the happiest in my life. Yea, and suffering and privation would be never anything to me, if I could always have thee with me, Virginia!"

How different, meanwhile, was the scene within the cave! How chafed the fiery Lysander! How spitefully Salina bit her lips at sight of him! And these two had once been lovers, and had also seen rainbows span their future!

Toby entered, the gleam of others' happiness still in his countenance

"De enemy hab dis'peared—all gone down in de frog."

"The frog, Toby?" said Mr. Villars.

"Yes, sar; right smart frog down 'ar in de volley!"

"He means a fog in the valley," explained Carl.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

OWING to the disturbances of the night the old clergyman had slept little. He now lay down on the couch, and soon sank into a profound slumber. When he awoke he heard the hum of voices. The cave was filled with armed men.

"It is Mr. Stackridge and his friends," said Virginia. "They have come to hold a council of war; and they look upon you as their grand sachem."

"I have brought them here," said Pomp, "at their request—all except Deslow."

"Where is he?"

"Deslow, I believe, has deserted!" said Stackridge.

"Ah! what makes you think so?"

"Well, I've watched him right close, and I've seen a good deal of what's been working in his mind. He's one of them fools that believe slavery is god, and he can't get over it. Pomp here saved our lives in the fire the other night, and Deslow couldn't stand it. To owe his life to a runaway slave—that was too dreadful!" said Stackridge with savage sarcasm.

"When did he go?

"Some of us were out foraging again last night, Withers and Deslow with the rest. Tell what he said to you, Withers."

The group of fugitives had gathered about the bed on which the old clergyman sat. Withers was scraping his long horny nails with a huge jackknife.

"He says to me, says he, 'Withers, we've got inter a bad scrape.' 'How so?' says I; for I thought we war gittin' out of a right bad scrape when we got out of that temp'rary jail. 'The wust hain't happened yet,' says he. 'That's bad,' says I, 'fur it's allus good fur a feller to know the wust has happened.' And so I told him a little story. Says I, 'When I was a little boy 'bout that high, I was helping my daddy one day secure some hay. Wal, it looked like rain, and we put in right smart till the fust sprinkles begun to fall—great drops, big as ox-eyes—and they skeert me, for I war awful 'fraid of gittin' wet. So what did I do but run and git

under some boards. My daddy war so busy he didn't see me, till bime-by he come that way, rolling up the haycocks to kill, and looked, and thar I war under the pile o' boards curled up like a hedgehog to keep dry. "Josh," says he, "what ye doin' thar? Why ain't ye to work?" "'Fraid o' gittin' wet!" 'Pon that he didn't say a word, but jest come and took me by the collar, and led me to a little run close by, and jest casoused me in the water, head over heels, and then jest pulled me out agin. "Now," says he, "ye can go to work, and you won't be the leastest mite afeard o' gittin' wet." Wal, 'twas about so. I didn't mind the rain arter that. Wal, Deslow,' says I, 'that larnt me a lesson; and ever sence I've always thought 'twas a good thing fur us, when trouble comes, to have the wust happen and know it's the wust, fur then we'se prepared fur't, and ain't no longer to be skeert by a little shower. That's what I said to Deslow." And Withers continued scraping his nails.

"Very good philosophy indeed!" said Mr. Villars. "And what did he reply?"

"He said, when the wust happened to us, we'd find we had no home, no property, and no country left; and fur his part he had been thinking we'd better go and give ourselves up, make peace with the authorities, and take the oath of allegiance. And I said, 'If that continners to be your ways of thinkin', I hain't the least objections to partin' comp'ny with yur as the house-dog said to the skunk; only,' says I, 'don't ye go to betrayin' us, if ye conclude to go.' Soon arter that we separated, and that's the last any on us have seen on him."

"Well," said Stackridge, "and now what is to be done? We have been disappointed in one thing. Our friends don't join us. One reason is, no doubt, they hain't got arms. But the main reason is, they look upon our cause as desperate. Desperate or not, it can't be helped as I see. With or without help, we must fight it through, or go back, like that putty-head Deslow, and take the oath of allegiance to the bogus government. Mr. Villars, you're wise, and we want your opinion."

"That, I fear, will be worth little to you!" answered the old man, bowing his head with true humility. "It seems to me that you are not to rely upon any open assistance from your friends, and I think that your retreat cannot long remain concealed. Therefore, this is what I advise. Make your preparations to disperse at any moment. You may be compelled to hide for months in the mountains and woods, hunted continually, and never permitted to sleep in safety twice in the same place. That will be the fate of hundreds. There is but one thing better for you to do. It is this. Force your way over the mountains into Kentucky, join the national army, and hasten its advance."

"And you?" said Captain Grudd.

The old man smiled with beautiful serenity.

"Perhaps I shall have my choice, after all. You remember what that was? To remain in the hands of our enemies. I ought never to have attempted to escape. I cannot help myself; I am only a burden to you. My daughters cannot continue to be with me here in this cave; and if I am to be separated from them, I may as well be in a Confederate prison as elsewhere. If the traitors seek my life, they are welcome to it."

"Oh, father! what do you say?" exclaimed Virginia.

"I advise what I feel to be best. I will give myself up to the military authorities. You and Salina, if she chooses, will, I am certain, be permitted to go to your friends in Ohio. But before I take this step, let all here who have strong arms to lend their country be already on their way over the mountains. Penn and Carl must go with them. Nor do I forget Pomp and Cudjo. They shall go too, and you will protect them."

Penn turned suddenly pale. It was the soundness of the good old man's counsel that terrified him. Separation from Virginia! She to be left at the mercy of the Confederates! This was the one thing in the world he had personally to dread.

"It may be good advice," he said. "It is certainly a noble self-sacrifice Mr. Villars proposes. But I do not believe there is one here who will consent to it. I say, let us keep together. If necessary, we can die together. We cannot separate, if by so doing we must leave him behind."

He spoke with intense feeling, yet his words were but feebly echoed by the patriots.

"What do you think, Pomp?" Penn asked in despair.

"I think that what Mr. Villars advises these men to do is the best thing."

Penn was stupefied. He saw that he stood alone, opposed to the general opinion. And something within himself said that he was selfish, that he was wrong.

"But as for himself," continued Pomp, "and us, I am not so sure. There are recesses in this cave that cannot easily be discovered. He shall remain, and we will stay and take care of him, if he will."

These calm words of the negro sounded like a reprieve to Penn's soul. He caught eagerly at the suggestion.

"Yes, if there must be a separation, Pomp is right. If many go, it will be believed that all are gone, and the rest can remain in safety."

"You are all too generous towards me," said the old minister. "But I have nothing more to say. I am very patient. I am willing to accept whatever God sends, and to wait His own blessed time for it."

CHAPTER XL.

THE WONDERS OF THE CAVE.

THE other inmates of the cave had breakfasted whilst the old clergyman was asleep. Toby was now occupied in preparing his dish of coffee, and Mr. Villars invited the patriots to remain and take a cup with him.

"Now is our time," Penn whispered to Virginia. "Will Salina come too?"

"What to do?" Salina asked.

"To explore the cave," said Penn courteously, yet trembling lest the invitation should be accepted.

She excused herself: she was feeling extremely fatigued; much to Penn's relief.

Carl saw the master he loved, and her who was dear to him as ever sister was to younger brother, depart with Cudjo and the torches, and was almost choking with tears as he saw the torches go out of sight. But, O joy! what did he see? Penn returning! Yes, and hastening straight to him!

"Carl, why don't you come too?"

There was no mistaking the sincerity of Penn's frank, animated face. Again the tears came into Carl's eyes, but this time they were tears of gratitude.

"Vould you really be pleased to have me?"

"Certainly, Carl! Virginia and I both spoke of it, and wondered why we had not thought to ask you before."

"Then I vill get my very goot friend the captain to excuse me. I sushpect he vill be vexed to part from me, but I shall take care that the ties that bind us shall not be proken,"

In pursuance of this friendly design, Carl produced a good strong cord which he had found in the cave. This he attached to the handcuffs by a knot in the middle; then, carrying the two ends in opposite directions around one of the giant's stools, he fastened them securely on the side farthest from the prisoner. This done, he gave the pistol to Toby, and invested him with the important and highly gratifying office of guarding "dat Shprowl."

"If you see him too much unhappy for my absence, and trying for some difersion by making himself free," said Carl, instructing him in the use of the weapon, "you shall shust cock it *so*—present it at his head or stomach, vichever is convenient—*so*—then pull the trigger as you please,

till he is vunce more quiet. That is all. Now I shall say goot pie to him till I come pack."

"Why don't you kill and eat him?" asked Withers, watching the boy's operations with humorous enjoyment.

"Him?" said Carl drily. "Thank ye, sir; I am not fond of veal."

With Carl at his side, Penn bore the torch above his head, and plunged into the darkness, which seemed to retreat before them only to reappear behind, surrounding and pursuing their little circle of light as it advanced.

A gallery, tortuous, lofty, sculptured by the gnomes into grotesque and astonishing forms, led from the inhabited vestibule to the wonders beyond. They had gone but a few yards when they saw a faint glimmer before them, which increased to a mild yellowish radiance flickering on the walls. It was the light of Cudjo's torch.

They found Cudjo and Virginia waiting for them at the end of a long and spacious hall, whose floor was heaped with fragments of rock, some of huge size, which had evidently fallen from the roof.

"De cave whar us lives des' like dis yer when me find um in de fust place," the negro was saying to Virginia. "Right smart stuns dar."

"What did you do with them?"

"Tuk all me could tote to make your little dressum-room wiv. Lef' de big 'uns fur cheers when me hab company, hiah yah! When Pomp come, him help me place 'em around scrumptious like. Pomp bery strong—lif like you neber see!"

Climbing over the stones, they reached, at the farther end of the hall, an abrupt termination of the floor. A black abyss yawned beyond. In its invisible depths the moan of waters could be heard. Virginia, who had been thrilled with wonder and fear, standing in the hall of the stones, and thinking of those crushing masses showered from the roof, now found it impossible not to yield to the terrors of her excited imagination.

"I cannot go any farther!" she said, recoiling from the gulf and drawing Penn back from it.

"Come right 'long!" cried Cudjo; "no trouble, missis!"

"See, he has piled stones in here and made some very good and safe stairs. Take my torch, Carl, and follow; Cudjo will go before with his. Now, one step at a time. I will not let thee fall."

The limestone, out of which the cave was formed, lay in nearly horizontal strata, and at the bottom of Cudjo's stairs they came upon another level floor. It was smooth and free from rubbish. A grey vault glimmered above their heads in the torchlight. The walls showed strange and grotesque forms in bas-relief, similar to those of the first gallery: here a couchant lion, so distinctly outlined that it seemed as if it must have been

chiselled by human art; an Indian sitting in a posture of woe, with his face buried in his hands; an Arctic hunter wrestling with a polar bear; the head of a turbaned Turk; and, most wonderful of all, the semblance of a vine (Penn named it "Jonah's gourd"), which spread its massive branches on the wall, and, climbing under the arched roof, hung its heavy fruit above their heads.

Close by "Jonah's gourd" a little stream gushed from the side of the rock, and fell into a fathomless well. The torches were held over it and the visitors looked down. Solid darkness was below. Carl took from his pocket a stone.

"It is the same," he said, "that Mishter Sprowl pumped his head against. I thought I should find some use for it, and now let's see."

He dropped it into the well. It sank without a sound, the noise of its distant fall being lost in the solemn and profound murmur of the descending water.

"What make de cave, anyhow?" asked Cudjo.

"The vair question I vas going to ask," said Carl.

"It will take but a few words to tell you all I know about it," said Penn. "Water containing carbonic acid gas has the quality of dissolving such rock as this part of the mountain is made of. It is limestone, and the water, working its way through it, dissolves it as it would sugar, only very slowly. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, massa! de carbunkum asses tote it away!"

"So, little by little, the interior of the rock is worn until these great cavities are formed."

"But what comes o' de rock?" cried Cudjo—"dat's de question!"

"What becomes of the sugar that dissolves in your coffee?"

"Soaks up, I reckon, so ye can't see it widout it settles."

"Just so with the limestone, Cudjo; it *soaks up*, as you say. And see—I will show you where a little of it has settled. Notice this long white spear hanging from the roof."

"Dat? Dat ar a stun icicle. Me broke de pint off oncet, but 'pears like it growed agin. Times de water draps from it right smart."

"A good idea—a stone icicle! It grew as an icicle grows downward from the eaves. It was formed by the particles of lime in the water, which have collected there and hardened into what is called *stalactite*. These curious smooth white folds of stone under it, which look so much like a cushion, were formed by the water as it dropped. This is called *stalagmite*."

"Heap o' dem 'ar sticktights furder 'long hyar," observed Cudjo, anxious to be showing the wonders.

They came into a vast chamber, from the floor of which rose against the darkness columns resembling a grove of petrified forest trees. The flaming torches, raised aloft in the midst of them, revealed, supported by them, a wonderful Gothic roof, with cornice, and frieze, and groined arches, like the interior of a cathedral. A very distinct fresco could also be seen, formed by mineral incrustations, on the ceiling and walls. On a cloudy background could be traced forms of men and beasts, of forests and flowers, armies, castles, and ships, not sculptured like the figures before described, but as designed by a subtle pencil.

"How wonderful!" said Virginia. "And is it not strange how Nature copies herself, reproducing silently here in the dark the very same forms we find in the world above? Here is a rose, perfect!"

"With petals of pure white gypsum," said Penn.

Whilst they were talking, Cudjo passed on. They followed a little distance, then halted. The light of his torch had gone out in the blackness, and the sound of his footsteps had died away. Carl remained with the other torch; and there they stood together, without speaking, in the midst of immense darkness ingulfing their little isle of light, and silence the most intense.

Suddenly they heard a voice far off, singing; then two, then three voices; then a chorus filling the heart of the mountain with a strange spiritual melody. Virginia was enraptured, and Carl amazed.

Penn, who had known what was coming, looked upon them with pride and delight. At length the music, growing faint and fainter, melted and was lost in the mysterious vaults through which it had seemed to wander and soar away.

It was a minute after all was still before either spoke.

"Certainly," Virginia exclaimed, "if I had not heard of a similar effect produced in the Mammoth Cave, I should never have believed that marvellous chorus was sung by a single voice!"

"A single voice!" repeated Carl, incredulous. "There vas more as a dozen voices!"

"Right, Carl!" laughed Penn. "The first was Cudjo's, and all the rest were those of the nymph Echo and her companions."

They continued their course through the halls of the echoes, and soon came to an arched passage, at the entrance of which Penn paused and placed the torch in a niche. A projection of the rock prevented the light from shining before them, yet their way was softly illumined from beyond, as by a dim phosphorescence. They advanced, and in a moment their eyes, grown accustomed to the obscurity, came upon a scene of surprising and magical beauty.

"The Grotto of Undine," said Penn.

It was to all appearance a nearly spherical concavity, some thirty yards in length, and perhaps twenty in perpendicular diameter. Carl's torch was concealed in the niche, and Cudjo's was nowhere visible, yet the whole interior was luminous with a dim and silvery halo. A narrow corridor ran round the sides, and resembled a dark ring swimming in nebulous light, midway between the upper and nether hemispheres of the wondrous hollow globe. Within this horizontal rim, floor there was none, and they stood upon its brink; and, looking up, they saw the marvellous vault all sparkling with stars and beaming with pale, pendent, taper, crystalline flames, noiseless and still; and, looking down, beheld beneath their feet, and shining with a yet more soft and dreamy lustre, the perfect counterpart of the vault above.

Penn held Virginia upon the verge.

"Wouldst thou like to see the face of Undine? Bend forward. Do not fear: I hold thee!"

By gentle compulsion he induced her to comply. She bent over the brink, and looked down, when, lo! out of the hazy effulgence beneath emerged a face looking up at her—a face dimly seen, yet full of vague wonder and surprise—a face of unrivalled sweetness and beauty, Penn thought. What did Virginia think?—for it was the reflection of her own.

Just then a duplicate glow, like a double sunrise, one part above and the other below the horizon, appeared at the farther end of the grotto. It increased, until they saw come forth from behind an upright rock an upright torch; and at the same time, from behind a suspended rock beneath, an inverted torch. Immediately after two Cudjos came in sight; one standing erect on the rock above, and the other standing upside down on—or rather under—the rock below.

"Take your torch, Carl," said Penn, "and go around and meet him."

The boy returned to the niche; and presently two Carls, with two torches, were seen moving around the rim of the corridor, one upright above, the other walking miraculously, head downwards, below.

The two Carls had not reached the rock when the two Cudjos stooped, and took up each a stone and threw them. One fell *upward* (so to speak) as the other fell downward: they met in the centre: there was a strange clash, which echoed through the hollow halls, and in a moment the entire nether hemisphere of the enchanted grotto was shattered into numberless flashing and undulating fragments.

Virginia had already perceived that the appearance of a concave sphere was an illusion produced by the ceiling lighted by Cudjo's hidden torch, and mirrored in a floor of glassy water. Yet she was entirely unprepared

for this astonishing result; and at sight of the Cudjo beneath instantaneously annihilated by the plashing of a stone, she started back with a cry.

"All those stalactites," said Penn, as the two torches were held towards the roof, "are of the most beautiful crystalline structure, and the spaces between are all studded with brilliant spars. The first time I was here, it was in April; the mountain springs were full, and every one of these *stone icicles* was dripping with water that percolated through the strata above. The effect was almost as surprising as what we saw before Cudjo cast the stone. The surface of the pool seemed all leaping and alive with perpetual showers of dancing pearls. But now the springs are low, or the water has found another channel. Yet this basin is always full."

"Why, so it is! I had no idea the water was so near!" And Virginia, stooping, dipped her hand.

The mirrored crystals were still coruscating and waving in the ripples as they passed around the rim of the rock, and followed Cudjo into a scarcely less beautiful chamber beyond.

Here was no water; but in its place was a floor of alabaster, from which arose a great variety of pure white stalagmites, to meet each its twin stalactite pendent from above. In some cases they did actually meet and grow together in perfect pillars, reaching from floor to roof.

"The stalagmites are very beautiful," said Virginia, "but the stalactites are still more beautiful."

"Dat's de last ob de sticktights," cried the black, standing at the end of the colonnade, and waving his torch above his head. "Now we's comin' to de run."

"Come," said Penn, "and I will show thee what Hood must have meant by the 'dark arch of the black flowing river.'"

A stupendous cavern of seemingly endless extent opened before them. Cudjo ran on ahead, shouting wildly under the hollow, reverberating dome, and waving his torch, which soon appeared far off, like a flaming star amid a night of darkness. Then there were two stars, which separated, and, standing one above the other, remained stationary.

"Listen!" said Penn. And they heard the liquid murmur of flowing water.

He took the torch from Carl, and advancing towards the right wall of the cavern, showed, flowing out of it, through a black, arched opening, a river of inky blackness. It rolled, with scarce a ripple, slow, and solemn, and still, out of that impenetrable mystery, and swept along between the wall on one side and a rocky bank on the other. By this bank they followed it, until they came to a natural bridge, formed by a limestone

cliff, through which it had worn its channel, and under which it disappeared. On this bridge they found Cudjo perched above the water with his torch.

They passed the bridge without crossing—for the farther end abutted high upon the cavern wall—and found the river again flowing out on the lower side. Few words were spoken. The vastness of the cave, the darkness, the mystery, the inky and solemn stream pursuing its noiseless course, impressed them all. Suddenly Virginia exclaimed, "Light ahead!" though Carl was with her, and Cudjo now walked behind.

It was a grey glimmer, which rapidly grew to daylight as they advanced.

"It is the chasm, or sink, where the roof of the cave has fallen in," said Penn.

While he spoke, a muffled rustling of wings was heard above their heads. They looked up, and saw numbers of large black bats, startled by the torches, darting hither and thither under the dismal vault. Birds, too, flew out from their hiding-places as they advanced, and flapped and screamed in the awful gloom.

To save the torches for their return, Cudjo now extinguished them. They walked in the brightening twilight along the bank of the stream, and found, to the surprise and delight of Virginia, some delicate ferns and pale green shrubs growing in the crevices of the rock. Vegetation increased as they proceeded, until they arrived at the sink, and saw before them steep banks covered with vines, thickets, and forest trees.

The river, whose former course had evidently been stopped by the falling in of the forest, here made a curve to the right round the banks, and half disappeared in a channel it had hollowed for itself under the cliff. Here they left it, and climbed to the open day.

"How strangely yellow the sunshine looks!" said Virginia. "It seems as though I had coloured glasses on. And how sultry the air!"

She looked up at the towering rocks that walled the chasm, and at the trees upon whose roots she stood, and whose tops waved in the summer breeze and sunshine, at the level of the mountain slope so far above. She could also see, on the summit of the cliffs, the charred skeletons of trees the late fire had destroyed.

"It was here," said Penn, "that Stackridge and his friends escaped. This leaning tree with its low branches forms a sort of ladder to the limbs of that larger one, and by these it is easy to climb——"

As he was speaking all eyes were turned upwards, when suddenly Cudjo uttered a warning whistle, and dropped flat upon the ground.

"A man!" said Carl, crouching at the foot of the tree.

Penn did not fall or crouch, nor did Virginia scream, although, looking up through the scant leafage, they saw, standing on the cliff, and looking down straight at them, at the same time waving his hand exultantly, one whom they well knew—their enemy, SILAS ROPES.

CHAPTER XLI.

PROMETHEUS BOUND.

AT the wave of the lieutenant's hand, a squad of soldiers rushed to the spot. In a minute their muskets were pointed downwards, and aimed.

"Fly!" said Penn, thrusting Virginia from him. "Carl, take her away!"

The boy drew her back down the rocks, following Cudjo, who was descending on all fours, like an ape. She turned her face in terror to look after Penn. There he stood, where she had left him, intrepid, his fine head uncovered, looking steadfastly up at the men on the cliff, and waving his hat defiantly. At once she recognised his noble self-sacrifice. It was his object to attract their fire, and so shield her from the bullets as she fled.

She struggled from Carl's grasp. "Oh, Penn!" she cried.

"Fire!" shouted Silas Ropes.

Crack! went a gun, immediately succeeded by an irregular volley. The smoke cleared, and there Penn still stood, smiling—for Virginia was unhurt.

The bullets had struck the trees and flattened on the stones all round him; but he was untouched. And before the rebels could reload their pieces, he was safe with his companions in the cavern. He found Cudjo hastily relighting his torch. Virginia was sitting on a stone where Carl had placed her.

"Is no guns here?" cried Carl.

"De men hab all um's guns," said Cudjo, over his kindlings. "Me gwine fotch 'em!"

And, his torch lighted, he darted away.

"Oh, if I had only that pistol, Carl!" said Penn, "I could manage to defend the chasm with it until they come!" He lighted his torch, and lifted Virginia to her feet. "Have no fear. Even if the rebels get possession here, the subterranean passage can be held by a dozen men against a hundred."

"I am not afraid now—I am quite strong."

"That is well. Carl, take the light and go with her."

"And vat shall you do?"

"I will stay and watch the movements of the soldiers."

"Very goot. But I have one little obshection."

"What is it?"

"You know the vay petter, and you vill take her safer as I can. But my eyes is vair vigorous, and I vill engage to vatch the cusses myself."

"Thou art right, my Carl!"

"Goot pie, Penn! Goot pie, Virginie!" cried Carl.

Handcuffed and securely bound to the rock, that modern Prometheus, Captain Lysander Sprowl, like his mythical prototype, felt the vulture's beak in his vitals.

Poor old Toby, with that foolish head and large tropical heart of his, knew no better than to feel a movement of compassion.

"Kin uh do anyting fur ye, sar?"

The unfeigned sympathy of the question gave the wily Prometheus his cue. He uttered a feeble moan, and studied to look as much sicker than he was as possible.

"Ye pooty sick, sar?"

"Water!" gasped Lysander.

The patriots had finished their coffee and taken their guns. Toby ran to them.

"Some on ye be so good as keep an eye skinned on de prisoner while I's gittin' him a drink!"

He hastened with the gourd to a dark interior niche where a little trickling spring dripped, drop by drop, into a basin hollowed in the rocky floor. As he bore it, cool and brimming, to Sprowl, Withers said—

"I don't keer! it's a sight to make most white folks ashamed of their Christianity to see that old nigger waiting on that old rascal 'fore his own back has done smarting!"

But the water was scarcely brought when Cudjo leaped into the circle, crying—

"De sogers! de sogers!"

"Where?" said Pomp, instinctively springing to his rifle.

"In de sink! Dey fire onto we and de young lady!"

"Any one hurt?"

"No. Massa Hapgood cotch de bullets in him's hat!" for this was the impression the negro had brought away with him. "Hull passel sogers! Sile Ropes—seed him fust ob all!"

There was a moment's confusion. Then those who had not already

taken their guns sprang to them. They had brought lanterns, which were now burning. They plunged into the gallery, following Pomp. Cudjo ran for his sword, drew it from the scabbard, and ran yelling after them.

There was one whose astonishment was largely mixed with joy. A moment since he was lying like a man near the last gasp, but now he started up, singularly forgetful of his dying condition, until reminded of it by feeling the restraint of the rope and seeing Toby. Lysander sank back with a groan.

"'Pears like you's a little more chirk," said Toby.

"My head! my head!" said Lysander. "My skull is fractured. Can't you loose the rope a little? The strain on my wrist is——" ending the sentence with a faint moan.

"Bery sorry, 'deed, sar! But I can't unloosen de rope fur ye."

And, full of pity as he was, the old negro resolutely remained faithful to his charge.

"Well, then," said Sprowl, "I have only one request to make. Let me see my wife and ask her forgiveness before I die."

"Dat am bery reason'ble; I'll speak to her, sar." And without losing sight of his prisoner, Toby went to Cudjo's pantry, now Virginia's dressing-room, into which Salina had retreated, and notified her of the dying request.

"He wishes to speak with me? To ask my forgiveness? Well, he shall have a chance!"

She went and stood over the prisoner, looking down upon him coldly, but with compressed lips.

"Well, what do you want of me?"

Sprowl made a motion for Toby to retire. Humbly the old negro obeyed, feeling that he ought not to intrude upon the interview; yet keeping his eye still on the prisoner, and his hand on the pistol.

"Sal"—in a low voice, and looking up at her, and showing his manacled hands—"are you pleased to see me in this condition?"

"I'd rather see you dead! If I were you I'd kill myself!"

"There's a knife on the table behind you. Give it to me, free my hands, and you won't have to repeat your advice."

She merely glanced over her shoulder at the knife, then bent h scowling looks once more on him.

"A captain in the Confederate army! outwitted and taken prisoner by a boy! kept a prisoner by an old negro! This, then, is the military glory you bragged of in advance! And I was going to be so proud of being your wife! Well, I am proud!"

"Sal, the other end of the cave is attacked, and it is sure to be carried

I shall soon be in the hands of my own men. If I don't succeed in doing something for myself first, it 'll be impossible for me to regain the position I've lost."

"Well, do something for yourself! What hinders you?"

"This cursed rope! I wouldn't mind the handcuffs if the rope was away. Just a touch with that knife—that's all, Sal."

"Yes! and then what would you do?"

"Run."

"And lose no time in sending your men to attack this end of the cave, too. Oh, I know you!"

"I swear to you, Sal, I never will take advantage of it in that way, if you will do me just this little favour."

"Hush! I know too well what your promises amount to."

"Well?" said Lysander despairingly.

"Well, I am going to help you, for all that. Only it must not appear as if I did it. And you shall keep your oath—or one of us shall die for it! Now be still!"

She walked back past the block that served as a table, and when between it and Toby, quietly took the knife from it, concealing it in her sleeve.

"Don't come for me to hear any more dying requests," she said to the old negro with a sneer. "Your prisoner will survive. Only give him a little coffee, if there is any. Here is some: I will wait upon him."

And, carrying the coffee, she dropped the knife at Lysander's side.

CHAPTER XLII.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

FIVE minutes later Penn and Virginia arrived. Penn ran eagerly for his musket. At the same time, looking about the cave, he was surprised to see only the old clergyman sitting by the fire, and Prometheus reclining by his rock.

"Where is Salina? Where is Toby?"

"Toby has just left his charge to see what discovery Salina has made outside. She went out previously and thought she saw soldiers."

At that moment Toby came running in.

"Dar's some men 'way down by de ravine! Oh, sar, I's berry glad you's come, sar!"

Penn took Pomp's glass, climbed along the rocky shelf, peered over the

thickets, and saw on the bank of the ravine, where Salina pointed them out to him, several men.

"I recognise one of our friends in a new uniform!" handing the glass to Salina.

Returning to the cave, he added in Virginia's ear—

"Augustus Bythewood!"

The bright young brow contracted. "Not coming here?"

"I trust not. But it looks like mischief."

He took his torch and gun. There was no time for adieus. In a moment he was gone.

Meanwhile Mr. Villars had called Toby to him, and said in a low voice—

"Is all right with your prisoner?"

"Oh, yes; he am bery quiet, 'pears like."

"You must look out for him. He is crafty. I feel that all is not right. When you were out, I thought I heard something like the sawing or tearing of a cord. Look to him, Toby."

"Oh, yes, sar, I shall!" And the confident old negro approached the rock.

There lay the rope about the base of it, still firmly tied on the side opposite the prisoner. And there crouched he, in the same posture of durance as before, except that now he had his legs well under him. His handcuffed hands lay on the rope.

"Right glad ter see yer convanescent, sar!"

Toby was bending over, examining his captive with a grin of satisfaction, when the latter, in a weak voice, made a humble request.

"I wish you would put on my cap."

"Wiv all de pleasure in de wuld, sar."

The cap had been thrown off purposely. Unsuspecting old Toby! The pistol was in his pocket. He stooped to pick up the cap and place it on Sprowl's head, when up leaped Lysander on his legs, knocking him down with the handcuffs, and springing over him.

Before the old man was fully aware of what had happened, and long before he had regained his feet, Lysander was in the thickets. In his hurry he thrust his wife remorselessly from the ledge before him, and flung her rudely down upon the sharp boughs and stones, as he sped by her.

Penn had judged correctly in two particulars. Deslow had turned traitor. And the personage in the new uniform down by the ravine was Lieutenant-Colonel Bythewood. But he was not anxious to deprive Ropes of his laurels, and perhaps he felt himself to be too fine a gentleman to

mix in a vulgar fight. He accordingly sent Ropes forward to surprise the patriots at the sink, while he moved with a small force cautiously up towards Gad's Leap.

The firing on the right apprised Augustus that the attack had commenced. This was the signal for him to advance boldly up from the ravine, and establish himself on an elevation commanding a view of the slope.

Suddenly a man came leaping down the slope, holding his hands together in a very singular manner. Bythewood started to his feet.

"Deuce take me," said he, "if it ain't Lysander! But what's the matter with his hands, sergeant?"

"Looks to me as though he had bracelets on," replied the experienced sergeant.

Some men were despatched to meet and bring the captain in. The sergeant found a key in his pocket to unlock the handcuffs. Then Lysander told the story of his capture, which, though modified to suit himself, excited Bythewood's derision. This stung the proud captain, who, to wash the stain from his honour, proposed to take a squad of men and surprise the cave.

Fired by the prospect of seeing Virginia in his power, Augustus had but one important order to give: "Bring your prisoners to me here!"

Instead of proceeding directly to the cave, Lysander used strategy. He knew that if his movements were observed, and their object suspected, Virginia would have ample time to escape with her father and old Toby into the interior caverns, where it might be extremely difficult to discover them. He accordingly started in the direction of the sink, as if with intent to reinforce the soldiers fighting there; then, dropping suddenly into a hollow, he made a short turn to the left, and advanced swiftly, under cover of rocks and bushes, towards the ledge that concealed the cave.

"How *could* you let him go, Toby?" cried Virginia, filled with consternation at the prisoner's escape.

The anguish of her tones pierced the poor old negro's soul.

"Dunno', missis, no more'n you do! 'Pears like he done gnawed off de rope wiv his teef!" For Lysander, having used the knife, had hidden it under the skins on which he sat.

Then Salina spoke, and denounced herself. After all the pains she had taken to conceal her agency in Sprowl's escape—inconsistent, impetuous, filled with rage against herself and him—she exclaimed—

"I did it! Here is the knife I gave him!"

Virginia stood white and dumb, looking at her sister. Toby could only tear his old white wool and groan.

"Salina," said her father solemnly, "you have done a very treacherous and wicked thing! I pity you!"

"I have done a damnable thing! I know it. Do you ask what made me? The devil made me. I knew it was the devil at the time, but I did it. But Lysander swore to me that he would not take advantage of his escape to betray or injure any of you. He will keep his oath. If he does not——"

She paused, and then said—

"Listen! I am a woman. But I will defend this place. I will stand there, and not a man shall enter till I am dead. I hope I shall not trouble you much longer."

She brushed back her hair from her large white forehead, and smiled a strange and vacant smile. Virginia saw that her wish was to die.

"Sister," she said gently, "we will all stay together if you stay. We must not give up this place! Our friends are lost—we are lost—if we give it up! Perhaps we can do something."

Toby entered.

"Dey ain't comin' dis yer way, nohow! Dey's gwine off to de Norf, hull passel on 'em."

"Give me that pistol, Toby," said Salina. "You can use Cudjo's axe if we are attacked. Place it where you can reach it, and then return to your look-out. Don't be deceived, but warn us at once if there is danger."

"My children," said the old man, "come near to me! I would I could look upon you once, for I feel that separation is near. Dear daughters!"—he took a hand of each—"if I am to leave you, grieve not for me, but love one another. LOVE ONE ANOTHER. I cannot say more. My children, the hour has come which is to decide much for us all. Remember my legacy to you—HAVE FAITH AND LOVE."

They knelt before him. He laid his hands upon their heads, and in a brief and fervent prayer blessed them. Both were sobbing.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE COMBAT.

POMP, rifle in hand, bearing a torch, led the patriots on their rapid return through the caverns.

"Lights down!" he said as they approached the vicinity of the sink. "We shall see them, but they must not see us."

In the hall of the bats they met Carl, who had seen their lights and come towards them.

"Hurry! hurry!" he said. "They are coming down the trees like the devil's monkeys! a whole caravan proke loose!"

They advanced until within a hundred yards of where the shaft of daylight came down. There they could distinguish, in the shining cleft under the brow of the cavern and above the rocky embankment, the forms of their assailants. Some had already gained a footing. Others were descending the tree-trunks in a dark chain, each link the body of a rebel.

"We must stop that!" said Pomp.

The men were deployed forward rapidly, and a halt ordered, each choosing his position.

"Ready! Aim!"

At that moment half-a-dozen men of the attacking party advanced, feeling their way over the rocks down which Penn and his companions had been seen to escape.

"Fire!" said Captain Grudd.

Instantly a jagged line of flashes leaped across the breast of the darkness, accompanied by a detonation truly terrible. Pomp laughed quietly, while Withers exclaimed—

"By the Etarnal! if I didn't fancy the hull ruf of the mountain had caved in!"

"Load!" said Captain Grudd sternly.

The rebels advancing over the rocks had suddenly disappeared, having either fallen in the crevices or scrambled back up the bank while hidden from view by the smoke.

"Now is our time! Clear them out!" said Grudd.

"Rush in and finish them with the bayonet!" said Stackridge. Six of the guns had bayonets, and his was one of them.

"Not yet!" said Pomp. "They will fire on you from above. We must first attend to that. Shall I show you? Then do as I do."

Loading his piece, he ran forward until, himself concealed under the brow of the cavern, he could see the rebels in the tree and on the cliff.

"Once more! All together!" he said, taking aim. "Give the word, captain!"

"Take the cusses on the tops of the rocks!" said Stackridge. "The rest are harmless."

Grudd gave the word. Flame from a dozen muzzles shot upwards from the edge of the pit. When the smoke rolled away the cliff was cleared.

"Now with your bayonets!" said Pomp. "This way!"

While the patriots, preparing for their second volley, were getting positions among the rocks on the left, Carl had crept up the embankment in front, and brought away two muskets from two dead rebels. These were they who had fallen at the first fire. Both guns had bayonets. Pomp took one, Carl kept the other. Cudjo, with his sword, accompanied the charging party, Grudd and the rest remaining at their post, ready to pick off any rebel that should appear on the cliff.

Pomp bounded upon the rocks and over them with a yell which the rest took up as they followed, charging headlong after him. Cudjo, brandishing his sword, leaped and yelled with the foremost—a figure fantastically terrible. Penn, with the fiery Stackridge on one side, and his beloved Carl on the other, forgot that he had ever been a Quaker, hating strife.

The rebels in the sink, fifteen in number, had had time to rally from their panic, and they now seemed inclined to make resistance. They were behind a natural breastwork, similar to that which had sheltered the patriots on the other side. They levelled their guns hastily and fired. One of the patriots fell. It was Withers.

"Give it them!" shouted Pomp.

"Every cussed scoundrel of 'em!" Stackridge cried.

"Kill! kill! kill!" shrieked Cudjo.

With such cries they charged over the rocks, straight at the faces and breasts of the Confederates. Some turned to fly, but beyond them was the unknown darkness into which the river flowed. They recoiled aghast from that. A few stood their ground. The bayonet which Penn had first made acquaintance with when it was thrust at his own breast, he shoved through the shoulder of a rebel whose clubbed musket was descending on Carl's head. Three inches of the blade came out of his back, and bearing him downwards in his irresistible onset, Penn literally pinned him to the ground. Cudjo slashed another hideously across the face with the sword. Pomp took the first prisoner: it was Dan Pepperill. The rest soon followed Dan's example, cried quarter, and threw down their arms.

"Quarter!" gasped the wretch Penn had pinned.

"You spoke too late—I am sorry," said Penn, with austere pity, as, placing his foot across the man's armpit to hold him while he pulled, he put forth his strength and drew out the steel. A gush of blood followed, and, with a groan, the soldier swooned.

"It is one of them vagabonds that gave you the tar and fedders!" said Carl.

The prisoners were disarmed, and ordered to remain where they were.

"Bring the wounded to me," said Pomp, hastening back to the spot where Withers had fallen.

Stackridge and another were lifting and bearing him to the shelter of the cave. Pomp assisted, skilfully and tenderly. Then followed those who bore away the wounded prisoners and the guns that had been captured. Pepperill had been ordered to help. He and Carl carried the man whose face Cudjo had slashed. This was the only rebel who had fought obstinately; he had not given up until an arm was broken, and he was blinded by his own blood. Penn and Devitt brought up the rear with the swooning soldier. When half-way over, they were fired upon by the rebels rallying to the edge of the cliff. Grudd and his men responded sharply, covering their retreat. Penn felt a bullet graze his shoulder. It made but a slight flesh wound there, but, passing down, it entered the heart of the wounded man, whose swoon became the swoon of death. This was the only serious result of the Confederate fire.

"I am glad I did not kill him," said Penn, as they laid the corpse beside the stream.

Then out of the mask of blood which covered the face of the stout fellow who had fought so well, there issued a voice that spoke, in a strange voice, these words:—

"*Was hat man mir gethan? Wo bin ich, mutter?*"

But the words were not strange to Carl; neither was the voice strange.

"Fritz! Fritz!" he answered, in the same language, "is it you?"

"I am Fritz Minnevich, that is true; and you, I think, are my cousin Carl."

They laid the wounded man near the stream, where Pomp was examining Withers's hurt.

"Oh, Fritz!" said Carl, "how came you here?"

"They said the Yankees were coming to take our farm, so Hans and I enlisted to fight. I got in here because I was ordered. We do as we are ordered. It was we who whipped the woman. We whipped her well. I hope my good looks will not be spoiled, for that would grieve our mother."

Thus the soldier talked in his native tongue, while Carl, in sorrow and silence, washed the blood from his face.

"What for do you do this, Carl?" said Fritz.

"Never mind vy," said Carl. "Oh, Pomp! this is my cousin; see vat you can do for him."

Pomp had been reluctantly convinced that he could do nothing for Withers; his wound was mortal. And Withers had said to him, in

cheerful, feeble tones, "I feel I'm about to the eend of my tether, so don't waste yer time on me."

So Pomp turned his attention to the Minnevich; but Penn and Stackridge remained with Withers.

"Wish ye had a Union flag to wrap me in when I'm dead, boys. That's what I've fit fur—that's what I meant to die for, if 'twas so ordered. It's all right, boys! Jest look arter my family a little, won't ye?"

These were his last words.

Penn and Stackridge rejoined their comrades in the fight.

"Shoot him! shoot him! shoot him!" cried Cudjo, in a frenzy of excitement, pointing at a rebel who had fallen from the tree upon the projection of the chasm wall. "Him dar!—dat Sile Ropes!"

"Ropes?" said Penn, looking up through the opening. "That he?"—raising his gun—"but he can do no harm there, and he can't get out."

"Don' ye see? Dey's got a rope to help him wif! Gib him a shot fust!—oh, gib him a shot!"

The projection to which the lieutenant clung was a broken shelf less than half-a-yard in breadth. There he cowered in abject terror betwixt two dangers—that of falling if he attempted to move, and that of being picked off if he remained stationary and in sight. To avoid both, he got upon his hands and knees, and hid his face in the angle of the ledge, leaving the posterior part of his person prominent, no doubt thinking, like an ostrich, that if his head was in a hole he was safe. At each shot Silas could be seen to root his nose still more industriously into the rock. At length, however, as Cudjo had declared, a rope was brought and let down to him.

"Take hold there!" shouted the rebels on the cliff. Ropes could feel the cord dangling on his back. "Tie it round your waist!"

Silas, without daring to look up, put out his hand, which groped awkwardly and blindly for the rope as it swung to and fro all around it. Finally he seized it, but ran imminent risk of falling as he drew it under his body. At length he seemed to have it secured, but in his hurry and trepidation he had fastened it considerably nearer his hips than his arms. The result, when the rebels above began to haul, can be imagined. Hips and heels were hoisted, while arms and head hung down, causing him to resemble very strikingly a frog hooked on for bait at the end of a fish-line. The affrighted face, drawn out of its hole, looked down ridiculously hideous into the rocky and bristling gulf over which he swung.

"Fire!" said Captain Grudd.

The volley was aimed, not at Silas, but at those who were hauling him up. Cudjo shrieked with frantic joy, expecting to see his old enemy

plunge head foremost among the stones on the bank of the stream. Such, no doubt, would have been the result, but for one sturdy and brave fellow at the rope. The rest, struck either with bullets or terror, fell back, loosing their hold; but this man clung fast, imperturbable. Alone, slowly, hand over hand, he hauled—grim, unterrified, faithful.

"That's a plucky fellow!" said Stackridge, with stern admiration of the soldier's courage. "I like his grit, but he must stop that!"

He reached for a loaded gun: he took Carl's. The boy turned pale, but said never a word, setting his lips firmly as he looked up at the cliff. Silas was swinging. The soldier was pulling in the rope, hitch by hitch, over the ledge. Stackridge took deliberate aim, and fired.

For a moment no very surprising effect was perceptible, only the man stopped hauling. Then he went down on one knee, paying out several inches of the rope, and letting the suspended Silas dip accordingly. It became evident that he was hit; he still grasped the rope, but it began to glide through his hands. Silas set up a howl—"Hold me! hold me!"—at the same time extending all his fingers to grasp the rocks.

The brave fellow made one last effort, and took a turn of the rope around his wrist. It did not slip through his hands any more. But soon *he* began to slip—forward—forward—on both knees now—his head reeling like that of a drunken man, and at last pitching heavily over the cliff.

Some of the cowards who had deserted their post sprang to save him; but too late: the man was gone.

It was fortunate for Silas that he had been let down several feet thus gradually. He was near the ledge from which he had been lifted, and had just time to grasp it again and crawl upon it, when the man fell, turning a complete summerset over him, fearful to witness; revolving slowly in his swift descent through the air; still holding with tenacious grip the rope; plunging through the boughs like a mere log tumbled from the cliff, and striking the rocks below—dead.

He had taken the rope with him, and Silas had been preserved from naring his fate only by a lucky accident. The knot at his hips loosened itself as he clutched the ledge, and let the coil fly off as the man shot down.

Not a gun was fired: both parties seemed struck dumb with horror at the brave fellow's fate. Then Carl whispered hoarsely—

"That vas my other cousin! That vas Hans!"

"Cudjo! Cudjo! what are you about?" cried Penn.

The black did not answer. Beside himself with excitement, he ran to the leaning tree and climbed it like an ape. The naked sword gleamed

among the twigs. Reaching the trunk of the tall tree he ascended that as nimbly, never stopping until he had reached the upper limbs. There was one that branched towards the ledge where Silas clung. At a glance choosing that, Cudjo ran out upon it, until it bent beneath his weight. There he tried in vain to reach his ancient enemy with the sword; the distance was too great, even for his long arms.

"Sile Ropes! ye ol' oberseer! g'e know Cudjo? Me Cudjo!" he yelled, slashing the end of the branch as if it had been his victim's flesh. "'Member de lickins? 'Member my gal ye got away? Now ye git yer pay!"

While he was raving thus, one of the soldiers above, sheltering himself from the fire of the patriots by lying almost flat on the ground, levelled his gun at the half-crazed negro's breast, and pulled the trigger.

A flash—a report—the sword fell, and went clattering down upon the rocks. Cudjo turned one wild look upwards, clapping his hand to his breast. Then, with a terrible grimace, he cast his eyes down again at Ropes, crept still farther out on the branch, and leaped.

Silas had his nose in the angle of the ledge again, and scarcely knew what had happened until he felt the negro alight on his back and fling his arms about him.

"Cudjo shot! Cudjo die! But you go too, Sile Ropes!"

As he gibbered forth these words, his long hands found the lieutenant's throat, and tightened upon it. A fearfully quiet moment ensued; then living and dying rolled together from the ledge, and dropped into the chasm. They struck the body of the dead Hans; that broke the fall; and Cudjo was beneath his victim. Ropes, stunned only, struggled to rise; but, held in that deadly embrace, he only succeeded in rolling himself down the embankment, Cudjo accompanying. The stream flowed beneath, black, with scarce a murmur. Silas neither saw nor heard it; but continuing to struggle, and so continuing to roll, he reached the verge of the rocks, and fell with a splash into the current.

Penn ran to the spot just in time to see the two bodies disappear together; the dying Cudjo and the drowning Silas sinking as one, and drifting away into the cavernous darkness of the subterranean river.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW AUGUSTUS FINALLY PROPOSED.

AFTER this there was a lull; and Penn, who had forgotten everything else whilst the conflict was raging, remembered that he had seen Bythewood at the ravine, and hastened to inform Pomp.

The death of Cudjo had plunged Pomp into a fit of stern, sad reverie. His surgical task performed, he stood leaning on his rifle, gazing abstractedly at the darkly gliding waves, when Penn's communication roused him.

"Ha!" said he with a slight start. "We must look to that! The danger here is over for the present, and two or three of us can be spared."

"Shall I go too?" said Carl. "It is time to see to my prisoner."

"Come," said Pomp.

The prisoner, as we know, had fled. We left him on his way back to the cave with a squad of men. Since which time this is what had occurred.

The assailants had approached so stealthily over the ledges below which Toby was stationed, looking intently for them in another direction, that he had no suspicions of their coming until they suddenly dropped upon him as from the clouds. He had no time to run for his axe, and he had scarcely given the alarm when he was overpowered, knocked down, and rolled out of the way off the rocks.

The assailants then, with Lysander at their head, rushed to the entrance of the cave. But there they encountered unexpected resistance: the two sisters—Salina with the pistol, Virginia with the axe.

"Hello, Sal!" cried Lysander, recoiling into the arms of his men; "what the devil do you mean?"

"I mean to kill you, or any man that sets foot in this place! That is what I mean!"

There could be no doubt about it: her eyes, her attitude, her whole form, from head to foot, looked what she said. She was flushed; a smile of wild and reckless scorn curved her mouth, and her countenance gleamed with a wicked light.

By her side was Virginia with the uplifted axe, expressing no less determination by her posture and looks, though she did not speak, though there was no smile on her pale lips, and though her features were as white as death.

"It's no use, gals!" said Sprowl. "Don't make fools of yourselves! You won't be hurt; but I'm bound to come in!"

"Do not attempt it! You have broken your oath to me. But I have made an oath I shall not break!"

What that oath was Salina did not say; but Lysander's changing colour betrayed that he guessed it pretty well.

"Call off your gals, Mr. Villars!" said Sprowl.

"Lysander!" said the solemn voice of the old minister from within, "hear me! My daughters do right to defend this place, which you, false and ungrateful, have betrayed. Attempt nothing further, for we are not afraid to die!"

"Go in, boys!" shouted Lysander, himself shrinking aside to let the soldiers pass.

Salina fired the pistol—not at the soldiers.

"She has shot me!" said Lysander, staggering back. "Kill the fiend; kill her!"

Instantly two bayonets darted at her breast. One of them was struck down by Virginia's axe, which half severed the soldier's wrist. But before the axe could rise and descend again, the other bayonet had done its work, and the soldiers rushed in.

When Penn and his companions arrived, not a living person was there; but alone, stretched upon the cold stone floor, where the grey light from the entrance fell--pulseless, pallid, with pale hands crossed peacefully on her bosom, hiding the wound, and features faintly smiling in their stony calm—lay the corpse of her that was Salina.

Toby, groaning on the stones outside, felt somebody shaking him, and heard the voice of Carl asking how he was.

"Dunno': sort o' common," said the old negro, trying to rise. He knew nothing of what had happened, except that he had been fallen upon and beaten down.

Leaving the dead behind, and carrying off the wounded and the prisoners, the sergeant, upon whom the command devolved after his captain was disabled, lost no time in reporting to the lieutenant-colonel.

Augustus stood up to receive the report and the prisoners—extremely pale, but appearing preternaturally courteous and composed.

"Have this old gentleman carried to his own house, and see that every attention is paid to him."

"And my daughter?" said the blind old man meekly.

"She shall follow you. I myself will accompany her."

"And my dead child up yonder?"

"She shall be brought to you at the earliest possible moment."

"And my faithful servant?"

"He shall be cared for."

"Thank you." And Mr. Villars bowed his white head upon his breast.

"Take the captain immediately to the hospital! And you fellow with the hacked wrist, go with him."

The number of men required to execute these orders (since both the old clergyman and the wounded captain had to be carried) left Augustus almost alone with Virginia. Having previously sent off all his available force to Ropes at the sink, in answer to a pressing call for reinforcements, he had now only the sergeant and two men at his beck. To these he made a motion, and they removed farther off.

"I wish to have a few words of conversation with you, Miss Villars. I beg you to be seated here in the shade."

Virginia remained standing, regarding him with features pale and firm as when she held the axe.

"If eyes could kill, Miss Villars, I think yours would kill me!"

"If polite cruelty can kill, YOU HAVE killed my sister!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, dear Miss Villars, but it was not I!"

"I beg no pardon, but I say it WAS you! And now you will murder my father—perhaps me."

"Oh, my excellent young lady, how you have misunderstood me! By Heaven, I swear!"—his voice shook with sincere emotion—"if I have committed a fault, it has been for the love of you! Such faults surely may be pardoned. Virginia! will you accept my life as an atonement for all I have done amiss? You shall bear my name, possess my wealth, and, if you do not like the cause I am engaged in, I will throw up my commission to-morrow."

There was a minute's pause, the intense glances of the girl piercing through and through that pale, polite mask to his soul.

"Well, what more?"

"What more? Ah, you are thinking of your friends—I should say of your friend! It is natural. I have no ill-will against him. Whatever you ask for him shall be granted. At a word from me, the fighting up there ceases; and he and the rest shall be permitted to go wherever they choose, unharmed."

"Well, and if I reject your generous offer?"

Augustus smiled as he answered, with a hard, inexorable purpose in his tones—

"Then, much as I love you, I can do nothing!"

"Nothing for my father?"

"Nothing!"

"Nor for me?"

"Not even for you!"

"Why, then, God pity us all!" said Virginia calmly.

"Your future is entirely in your own hands. On the one side, what I have promised. On the other hand——" Augustus thought he heard a crackling of sticks, and looked around.

"On the other"—Virginia took up the unfinished speech—"the fate of a friendless, fatherless woman in this chivalrous South! I know how you treat such women. I know what awaits me on that side. And I accept it. My friends can die. My father can die; and I can. All this I accept; all the rest, you and your offers, I reject. I would not be your wife to save the world. Because I not only do not love you, but because I detest you. You have my answer."

"All is over, then! Without cause you hate me, Miss Villars. Hitherto, in all that has happened to you and your friends, I have been blameless. If in the future I am not so, remember it is your own fault."

"Hitherto, in the wrong that has happened to me and my friends, you have NOT been blameless! In the future you cannot do more to injure us than you have already done, or meant to do."

Again there was a slight noise in the thicket behind them, and he would have been glad to make that an excuse for leaving her a moment; but her spirit held him.

"Do you remember the night my father was arrested?"

"I do."

"And how you that day took a journey to be away from us in our trouble?"

"I certainly took a short journey that day, but——" his eyes flickering with the uneasiness of guilt.

"And do you remember a conversation you had with Lysander under a bridge?"

His face suddenly flushed purple. "The villain has betrayed me," he thought. Then he stammered, "I hope you have not been listening to any of that fellow's slanders."

"You talked with Lysander under the bridge. Your conversation was heard, every word of it, by a third person, who lay concealed under the planks, behind you."

"A villainous spy!" articulated Augustus.

"No spy, but the man you two were at that moment seeking to kill: PENN HAPGOOD, THE SCHOOLMASTER."

It was a blow. Poor Bythewood, too luxurious and inert to be a great villain, was only a weak one, and, wounded in his most sensitive point, his pride, he writhed for a space with unutterable chagrin and rage.

"Very well! You think you know me, then!" He seized her wrists. "Now hear me! I am not to be spurned like a dog, even by the foot of the woman I love. You reject, despise, insult me. As for me, I say this: all shall be as I have pronounced. Your father, your lover—not Fate itself shall intervene to save them! And as for you——"

Again he heard a rustling by the ravine; this time so near that it startled him. He looked quickly around, and saw, slowly peering through the bushes, a dark human face.

CHAPTER XLV.

MASTER AND SLAVE CHANGE PLACES.

THE sergeant and his two men were several rods distant: the bush through which that menacing visage peered was within as many feet. Augustus reached for his revolver.

"Make a single move—speak a single word—and you are food for the buzzards!" came a whisper from the bush that might well chill his blood. "You know this rifle—and you know me!" And in the negro's face shone a glitter of the old, untamable, torrid ferocity of his tribe—not pleasing to Augustus.

"What do you want?"

"Give your revolver to that girl—instantly!"

"I have men within call!"

"So have I."

Through the bush, advancing noiselessly, came the straight steel barrel of a rifle that had never missed fire but once: that was when it had been aimed by Augustus at the head of Pomp. Now it was aimed by Pomp at the head of Augustus. Bythewood hesitated in mortal fear.

"Obey me! I shall not speak again!"

And there was heard in the bush another slight noise, too short, quick, and clicking to be the crackle of a twig. He turned, and with trembling hand made Virginia a present of the revolver.

"Do you know how to use it?" Pomp asked. She nodded, breathless. "And you will use it if necessary?" She nodded again, and held the weapon prepared. "Now"—to Bythewood—"send those men away."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I mean to spare their lives and yours, if you obey me. To kill you without much delay if you do not."

"If you shoot"—Bythewood was beginning to regain his dignity—'they will rush to the spot before you can escape, and avenge me well!"

"Look where the boulder lies, up there by the ravine. You will see a

twinkle of steel among the leaves. There are guns aimed at your men. You understand?"

Perhaps Augustus did not distinguish the guns; but he understood.

"I would prefer not to shed blood. So decide, and that quickly!" said Pomp.

"And if I comply?"

"Comply readily with all I shall demand of you, and not a hair of your head shall be harmed. Now I count ten. At the word ten, I send a bullet through your heart if those men are still there." He commenced, like one telling the strokes of a tolling bell: "One—two—three four—five——"

"Sergeant," called Augustus, "take your men and report to Lieutenant Ropes at the sink."

"A fine time to be taken up with a love affair!" growled the sergeant as he obeyed.

"Now what?" said Bythewood, under an air of bravado concealing the despair of his heart.

"Come!" said Pomp, with savage impatience—for he knew well that, if Bythewood had not yet learned of Ropes' death, messengers must be on the way to him, and therefore not a moment was to be lost. He opened the bushes. Augustus crept into them: Virginia followed. But then suddenly the negro seemed to change his plans, the spirit and firmness of the girl inspiring him with a fresh idea.

"Miss Villars, we are going to the cave. Look down the ravine there —you see this path is rough."

"Oh, I can go anywhere, you know!"

"But haste is necessary. You shall return the way you came. Take this man with you. If you are seen by his soldiers, they will think all is well. Make him go before. Shoot him if he turns his head. Dare you?"

"I will!" said Virginia.

"Keep near the ravine. My rifle will be there. If you have any difficulty, I will end it. Now march!"—thrusting Bythewood out of the thicket.

As Virginia approached the cave with her prisoner, the two guns, having followed them closely all the way, came up out of the ravine. They were accompanied by Penn and Carl. In the gladness of that sight Virginia almost forgot her dead sister and her captive father.

In the cave was Toby, wailing over the body of Salina. But at the sight of the living sister he rose up and was comforted.

Pomp had remained to cover the retreat. When all were safely arrived, he came bounding into the cave, jubilant.

"Sit here." Augustus took one of the giant's stools. "I have a few

words to say to this man: in the meanwhile one of you"—turning to Penn and Carl—"hasten to the sink, and ask Stackridge to send me as many men as he can spare. Bring a couple of the prisoners—we shall need them."

Bythewood sat on the rock, his head heavy and hot, his feet like clods of ice, and his heart collapsing with intolerable suspense. The gloom of the cave, and the strangeness of all things in it; the sight of the corpse near the entrance—of Toby, at Virginia's suggestion, wiping up the pools of blood—Virginia herself perfectly calm; Penn carefully untying and straightening the pieces of rope that had served to bind Lysander—all this impressed him powerfully.

"I suppose," said he, "I am to be treated as a prisoner of war?"

Pomp smiled. "Answer me a question. If you had caught me, would you have treated me as a prisoner of war?—Yes or no; we have no time for parley."

"No," said Augustus frankly.

"Very well! I have caught you!"

"You promised that not a hair of my head should be injured."

"The hair of your head is not the flesh of your body. No, I will not injure *the hair!*"—Pomp waited for his prisoner to take in all the horrible suggestiveness of this equivocation, then resumed—"Did not you promise your dying brother in my presence to give me my freedom? Answer—yes or no?"

"Yes," faltered Augustus.

"And did you give it me?"

"No." And Augustus felt that out of his own mouth he was condemned.

"Well, I shall keep my promise better than you kept yours. Comply with all I demand of you (this is what I said), and no part of you, neither flesh nor hair, shall be harmed."

"What do you demand of me?"

"This. Here are pen and ink. Write as I dictate."

"What?"

"An order to have the fighting on your side discontinued, and your forces withdrawn."

Augustus hesitated to take the pen.

"I have no words to waste. If you do not comply readily with what I require, it is no object for me that you should comply at all."

Penn came and stood by Pomp, looking calm and determined as he. Virginia came also, and looked upon the prisoner, without a smile, without a frown, but strangely serious and still. He took the quill, bit the feather end of it in supreme perplexity of soul, then wrote,

"Very well," said Pomp, reading the order. "But you have forgotten to sign it." Augustus signed. "Now write again. A letter to your colonel. Mr. Hapgood, please dictate the terms."

Penn understood the whole scheme; he had consulted with Virginia, and he was prepared.

"A safe-conduct for Mr. Villars, his daughter and servants, beyond the Confederate lines. This is all I have to insist upon."

"I," said Pomp, "ask more. The man who betrayed us must be sent here."

"If you mean Sprowl," said Bythewood, "his wife has no doubt saved the trouble."

"Not Sprowl, but DESLOW."

Deslow had been promised not only pardon, but protection from the very men he betrayed.

"I have no influence whatever with the military authorities," the prisoner said.

"You forget what you boasted to Sprowl under the bridge," said Penn.

"You forget what you just now boasted to me," said Virginia.

"Call it boasting," said Bythewood doggedly. "Absolutely, I have not the power to effect what you require."

"It is your misfortune, then," said Pomp. "To have boasted so, and now fail to perform, will simply cost you your life. Will you write or not?"

The prisoner remained sullen, abject, silent for some seconds. Then, with a deep breath which shook all his frame, and an expression of the most agonising despair on his face, he took the pen.

"I will write; but I assure you it will do no good."

"So much the worse for you," was the grim response.

Mechanically and briefly Bythewood drew up a paper, signed his name, and shoved it across the table.

"Does that suit you?"

Pomp did not offer to take it.

"If it suits you, well. I shall not read it. It is not the letter that interests us; it is the result."

Bythewood suddenly drew back the paper, pondered its contents a moment, and cast it into the fire.

"I think I had better write another."

"I think so too. I fear you have not done what you might to impress upon the colonel's mind the importance of these simple terms—a safe-conduct for Mr. Villars and family, the troops withdrawn entirely from the mountains, and Deslow delivered here to night. And beware"—Pomp

perceived by a strange expression which had come into the prisoner's face that this counsel was necessary—"beware that he does not misunderstand you, and send a force to rescue you from our hands. If such a thing is attempted, this cave will be found barricaded. With what, you wonder? With those stones? With your dead body, my friend!"

After that hint, it was evident Augustus did not choose to write what had first entered his mind on learning that his address to the colonel was not to be examined. Penn handed him a fresh sheet, and he filled it—a long and confidential letter, of which we regret that no copy now exists.

Before it was finished, Carl returned, accompanied by four of the patriots and two of the prisoners. One of these last was Pepperill. He was immediately paroled, and sent off to the sink with the order that had been previously written. The letter completed, it was folded, sealed, and despatched by the other prisoner to Colonel Derring's head-quarters.

"Do you believe Deslow will be delivered up?" said Stackridge, in consultation with Penn in a corner of the cave; the farmer's grey eye gleaming with anticipated vengeance.

"If Derring, who is Bythewood's devoted friend, can find means to give up the traitor without too gross an exposure of his perfidy, he will do it. But I regret that Pomp insisted on that hard condition."

"He is right!" said Stackridge. "Deslow, if guilty, must pay for this day's work!"

"There is no doubt of his guilt. Pepperill knew of it—he whispered it to Pomp at the sink."

"Then Deslow dies the death!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TRAITOR.

THE news of the disaster at the sink, and of the loss of prisoners, had reached Colonel Derring, and he was preparing to forward reinforcements, when Bythewood's letter arrived.

Of the colonel's reflections on the receipt of that singular missive little is known. He was unwontedly cross and abstracted for an hour. At the end of that time he asked for the renegade Deslow, and at the end of another hour Deslow had been found and brought to head-quarters.

"You have done an honourable and patriotic work, Mr. Deslow. Your friends are coming to terms. Bythewood is at this moment engaged in an amicable conference with them."

"And they have no suspicions?"

"None whatever, and I've been thinking you might help along matters immensely if you would go up and join Bythewood, and represent to your friends the folly of holding out any longer."

Deslow felt strong misgivings about undertaking this delicate business. But persuasions, flatteries, and promises prevailed upon him at last. And at sundown he set out, accompanied by the man who had brought Bythewood's letter.

In consequence of the messenger's long absence, it was beginning to be feared, by those who had sent him, that he had gone on a fruitless errand. Evening came. There was sadness on the faces of Penn and Virginia as they sat by the corpse of Salina. Pomp was gloomy and silent. Bythewood, bound to Lysander's rock, sat waiting, with feelings we will not seek to penetrate, for the answer to his letter. In that letter he had mentioned, among other things, a certain pair of horses that were in his stable. Had he known that the colonel, during his hour of moroseness, had gone over to look at these horses, and that he was now driving them about the village, well satisfied with the munificent bribe, he would, no doubt, have felt easier in his mind.

Suddenly the sentinel at the door announced an arrival; and the messenger entered, followed by Deslow.

The traitor came in, smiling in most friendly fashion upon his late companions, even offering his hand to Pomp, who did not accept it. Then he saw in the faces that looked upon him a stern and terrible triumph. By the rock he beheld Bythewood bound.

The messenger brought a letter for Augustus. Pomp took it.

"This interests us!" he said, breaking the seal. "Excuse me, sir!"—to Bythewood—"I was once your servant; and I had forgotten that circumstances have slightly changed! As your hands are confined, I will read it for you."

"DEAR GUS,—This is an awful bad scrape you have got into; but I suppose I must get you out of it. Villars shall have passports, and an escort, if he likes. I'll keep the soldiers from the mountains. The hardest thing to arrange is the Deslow affair. I don't care a curse for the fellow, but I don't want the name of giving him up. So, if I succeed in sending him, keep mum. Probably *he* never will come away to tell a tale.

"Yours, &c., "DERRING.

"P.S. Thank you for the horses."

Then Pomp turned and looked upon the traitor, who had been himself betrayed. His ghastly face was of the colour of greyish-yellow parch-

ment. His hat was in his hand, and his short stiff hair stood erect with terror.

"Have you anything to confess?" Pomp said to him. "If so, speak, for your time is short."

Deslow said nothing: his organs of speech were paralysed.

"Very well: then I will tell you, we know all. We trusted you: you have betrayed us. Withers is dead: you killed him. Cudjo is dead: his blood is upon your soul. For this you are now to die."

It was some time before the fear-stricken culprit could recover the power of speech. Then, in a sudden, hoarse, and scarcely articulate shriek, his voice burst forth:—

"Save me! save me!"

He rushed to where the patriots stood. But they thrust him back sternly.

"This is Pomp's business. Deal with him!"

"Will no one save me? Will no one speak for my life?" These words were ejaculated with the ghastly accent and volubility of terror.

"Your life is forfeited. Pomp saved it once; now he takes it. It is just," said Stackridge.

"My God! my God! my God!" Thrice the doomed man uttered that sacred name with wild despair, and with intervals of strange and silent horror between. "Then I must die!"

"*I* will speak for you," said a voice of solemn compassion. And Penn stepped forward.

Pomp was leaning thoughtfully by one of the giant's stools. Penn drew near to him. Deslow crouched behind, his whole frame shaking visibly.

"Pomp, if you love me, grant me this one favour. Leave this wretch to his God. What satisfaction can there be in taking the life of so degraded and abject a creature?"

"There is satisfaction in justice," replied Pomp, quietly smiling.

"Oh, but the satisfaction there is in mercy is infinitely sweeter! Forgiveness is a holy thing, Pomp! It brings the blessing of Heaven with it, and it is more effective than vengeance. This man has a wife; he has children; think of them!"

These words, and many more to the same purpose, Penn poured forth with all the earnestness of his soul. He pleaded; he argued; he left no means untried to melt that adamantine will. In vain all. When he finished, Pomp took his hand in one of his, and laying the other kindly on his shoulder, said in his deepest, tenderest tones—

"I have heard you because I love you. What you say is just. But

another thing is just—that this man should die. Ask anything but this of me, and you will see how gladly I will grant all you desire."

"I have done." Penn turned sadly away. "It is as I feared, Deslow: there is no hope."

Then Deslow, regaining somewhat of his manhood, drew himself up and prepared to meet his fate.

"Soon?" he asked, more firmly than he had yet spoken.

"Now," said Pomp. He lighted a lantern. "You must go with me. There are eyes here that would not look upon your death." He took his rifle. "Go before." And he conducted his victim into the recesses in the cave.

They came to the well into the unfathomable mystery of which Carl had dropped the stone. There Pomp stopped.

"This is your grave. Would you like a look at it?" He held the lantern over the fearful place. The falling waters made in those unimaginable depths the noise of far-off thunders. Half dead with fear already, the wretch looked down into the hideous pit.

"Must I die?" he uttered in a ghastly whisper.

"You must! I will shoot you first in mercy to you, for I am not cruel. Have you prayers to make? I will wait."

Deslow sank upon his knees. He tried to confess himself to God, to commit his soul with decency into His hands. But the words of his petition stuck in his throat: the dread of immediate death absorbed all feeling else.

Pomp, who had retired a short distance, supposed he had made an end.

"Are you ready?" he asked, placing his lantern on the rock, and poising his rifle.

"I cannot pray!" said Deslow. "Send for a minister—for Mr. Villars—I cannot die so."

"It is too late," answered Pomp, sorrowful, yet stern. "Mr. Villars has been carried away by the soldiers you sent. If you cannot pray for yourself, then there is none to pray for you."

Scarce had he spoken, when out of the darkness behind him came a voice, saying with solemn sweetness, as if an angel responded from the invisible profound—

"I will pray for him!"

He turned, and saw in the lantern's misty glimmer a spectral form advancing. It was Virginia. All the way through the dismal galleries of the cave, and down Cudjo's stairs, she had followed the executioner and his victim, in order to plead at the last moment for that mercy for which Penn had pleaded in vain.

Struck with amazement, Pomp gazed at her for a moment as if she had been really a spirit.

"How came you here?"

She laid one hand upon his arm; with the other she pointed upwards, her eyes all the while shining upon him with a wondrous brilliancy, which was of the spirit indeed, and not of the flesh.

"Heaven sent me to pray for him—and for you."

"For me, Miss Villars?"

"For you, Pomp! For if you slay this man, then you will have more need of prayers than he."

Pomp was shaken. Yet he retained his haughty firmness, and said coldly—

"If there had been mercy for this man, Penn would have obtained it. The hardest thing I ever did was to deny him. What is there to be said which he did not say?"

"Oh, he spoke earnestly and well!" replied Virginia. "I wondered how you could listen to him and not yield. But he is a man, and as a man he gave up all hope when reason failed, and he saw you so implacable. But I would never have given up. I would have clung to your knees, and pleaded with you so long as there was breath in me to ask or heart to feel. I would not have let you go till you had shown mercy to this poor man" (Deslow had crawled to her feet: there he knelt, grovelling) "and to yourself, Pomp! If he dies repenting, and you kill him unrelenting, I would rather be he than you. When we shut the gate of mercy on others we shut it on ourselves. For all that you have done for my father and friends, and for me, I am filled with gratitude and friendship. For this reason I would save you from a great crime."

There was silence for some seconds. Then Pomp spoke, still without raising his eyes, in a deep, subdued voice.

"This man is the hater of my race. He is of those who rob us of our labour, our lives, our wives, and children, and happiness. They enslave both body and soul. They destroy us with ignorance and vice. To take from us the profits of our toil is little; but they take from us our manhood also. Yet here he came, and accepted life and safety at my hands. He made an oath, and I made an oath. His oath was never to betray my poor Cudjo's secret. The oath I made was to kill him as I would a dog if his should be broken. It has been broken. My poor Cudjo is dead. Withers is dead. Your sister is dead. I see it to be just that this traitor too should die!"

Again he poised his rifle. But Virginia threw herself upon the victim, covering with her own pure bosom his miserable, guilty breast.

Pomp smiled. "Do not fear. For your sake I have pardoned him."

"Oh, this is the noblest act of your life, Pomp!" she exclaimed, clasping his hand with joy and gratitude.

Then those who had been left behind in the cave, listening for the death-signal, heard the report of a rifle ringing through the chambers of the rock. Not long after Pomp and Virginia returned, and Deslow was not with them. Augustus heard—Augustus saw—nor knew he any reason why the fate of Deslow should not be his own.

"Is justice done?" said Stackridge, with stern eyes fixed on Pomp.

"Is justice done?" said Pomp, turning to Virginia.

"Justice is done!" she answered, in a serious, firm voice.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BREAD ON THE WATERS.

THE next morning a singular procession set out from the cave. Stretchers had been framed of the trunks and boughs of saplings, and upon these the dead and wounded of yesterday were placed. They were borne by the prisoners of yesterday, who had been paroled for the purpose. Carl walked by the side of the litter that conveyed his cousin Fritz, talking cheerfully to him in their native tongue. Behind them was carried the dead body of Salina, followed by old Toby with uncovered head. With him went Pepperill, charged with the important business of seeing that all was done for the Villars family which had been stipulated, and of reporting to Pomp at the cave afterwards.

Last of all came Virginia, leaning on Penn's arm.

Pepperill was intrusted with a second letter from Bythewood to the colonel, couched in these terms:—

"*Deslow was taken last night, and slaughtered in cold blood. The same will happen to me if all is not done as agreed. I am to be retained as a hostage until Pepperill's return. For Heaven's sake, help Mr. Villars and his family off with all convenient despatch, and oblige,*" &c.

Virginia was to try her fortune with her father; but Penn's lot was cast with his friends who remained at the cave.

"No farther now! Oh, you must go no farther!" And, resolutely pausing, she called to Carl—for Carl's lot too lay with his. Toby and Pepperill also stopped.

"Daniel," said Penn, with impressive solemnity, "into thy hands I commit this precious charge. Be faithful. Good Toby, I trust we shall meet again in God's good time. Farewell! farewell!"

And the procession went its way; only Penn and Carl remained gazing after it long, with hearts too full for words.

When it was out of sight, and they were returning silently to retrace their steps, they saw a man come out of the woods, and beckon to them. It was a negro—it was Barber Jim.

Permitted to approach, he told his story. Since the escape of the arrested Unionists through his cellar, he had been an object of suspicion, and last night his house had been attacked by a mob. He had managed to escape, and was now hiding in the woods to save his life.

"Deslow betrayed you with the rest," said Penn; "that explains it."

"My wife—my two daughters, what will become of them?" said the wretched man. "And my property, that I have been all this while laying up for them!"

"Do not despair, my friend. Your property is mostly real estate, and cannot be so easily appropriated to rebel uses as the money deposited for me in the bank, from which I was never allowed to draw it! It will wait for you. A kind Providence will care for your family, I am sure. As for you, I do not see what else you can do but share our fortunes. There is one comfort for you—we are all about as badly off as yourself."

"You shall have your pick of some muskets," said Carl gaily, "and you vill find us as jolly a set of vagabonds as ever you saw."

"Have you plenty of arms?"

"Arms is more plenty as provisions. Vat is vanted is vittles. Vat is vanted most is vegetables. Bears and vild turkeys invite themselves to be shot, but potatoes keep vair shy, and ve suffers for sour krout."

Barber Jim mused. "I will go with you. I am glad," he added, as if to himself, "that I paid Toby off as I did."

What he meant by this last remark will be seen.

Mr. Villars had taken the precaution to invest his available funds in Ohio Railroad stock some time before. Arrived in Cincinnati, he would be able to reap the advantages of this timely forethought. But in the meantime the expenses of a long journey must be defrayed, and he found it impossible now to raise money on his house or household goods. All the ready cash he could command was barely sufficient to afford a decent burial to his daughter. He was discussing this serious difficulty with Virginia, whilst preparations for Salina's funeral and their own departure were going forward simultaneously, when Toby came trotting in, jubilant and breathless, and laid a little dirty bag in his lap.

"I's fotched 'em! dar ye got 'em, massa!" And the old negro wiped the sweat from his shining face.

"What, Toby? money!" (for the little bag was heavy.) "Where did you get it?"

"Gold, sar! Gold, Miss Jinny! Needn't look 'spicious! I neber got 'em by no underground means! I'll jes' 'splain 'bout dat. Ye see, Massa Villars, eber sence ye gib me my freedom, ye been payin' me right smart wages—seben dollar a monf! Dunno' how much dat ar fur a year, but I reckon it ar a heap! An' you rec'lec' you says to me, you says, 'Hire it out to some honest man, Toby, and ye kin draw inference on it,' you says. So what does I do but go and pay it all to Barber Jim fast as eber you pays me. 'Pears like I neber knowed how much I was wuf, till tudder day he says to me, 'Toby,' he says, 'times is so mighty skeery I's afeard to keep yer money for ye any longer; hyar 'tis fur ye, all in gold.' So he gibs it to me in dis yer little bag, an' I takes it, an' goes an' buries it 'hind the cowshed, whar 'twould keep sweet, ye know, fur de family. An' hyar it ar, shore enough, massa, jes' de ting fur dis yer 'casion!"

"So you got it by *underground means*, after all!" said Virginia, with mingled laughter and tears, opening the bag and pouring out the bright eagles.

The old clergyman was silent for a space, overcome with emotion.

"God bless you for a faithful servant, Toby! and Barber Jim for an honest man!"

"Wust on't is, Jim hisself's got inter trouble now," said Toby. "He hab to put fur de woods, an' his family wants to git to de Norf, whar dey tinks he'll mabby be gwine to meet 'em; but dey can't seem to manage it."

"Oh, father, I have an idea! You will have a right to take your *servants* with you, and Jim's wife and daughters might pass as servants."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

EMANCIPATION OF THE BONDMEN—CONCLUSION.

A WEEK had elapsed since Augustus became a captive, when, one cloudy afternoon, Dan Pepperill returned alone to the mountain cave. Pomp met him at the entrance.

"All safe?"

"I be durned if they ain't!" said Dan, exultant. "The ol' man, and the nigger, and the gal, and Jim's wife and darters inter the bargain! Went with 'em myself all the way, by stage and rail, till I seen 'em over the line inter ol' Kentuck'. Durned if I didn't wish I war gwine for good myself."

"You shall go now if you will. I have been waiting only for you.

Cudjo is dead. All the rest are gone. There is nothing to keep me here. Will you go back to the rebels, or make a push with us for the free states? Speak quick!"

Pepperill only groaned.

"Nine more have joined since Jim came. They make a strong party, all armed, and determined to fight their way through. They are already twenty miles away; but we will overtake them to-morrow. I am to guide them: I know every cave and defile. Will you come?"

"Pomp, ye know I'd be plaguy glad ter; but 'tain't so ter be! I hain't no gre't fancy fur this secesh business, that ar' a fact. But I'm in fur't, and I reckon I sh'll haf' ter put it through;" and Dan heaved a deep sigh of regret.

Pomp smiled with mingled pity and derision. "Good-bye, then! I hope this war will do something for your class as well as for mine—you need it as much! Wait here, and you shall have company."

He took a lantern, and entered the interior chamber of the cave. After the lapse of many minutes he returned, dragging, as from a dungeon, into the light of day, a wretch who could scarcely have expected ever to behold that blessed boon again—he was so abject, so filled with joy and trembling. It was Deslow. Then turning to the corner where Augustus sat confined, the negro cut his bonds and lifted him to his feet. Poor Bythewood, rheumatic, stiff in the joints, and terribly wasted by anxiety and chagrin, presented a scarcely less piteous spectacle than Deslow; nor were his fallen spirits revived by the sight of this craven, whom he had supposed to be long since past the memory of the wrong he had done him, and the earthly passion for revenge.

"My friends," said Pomp, leading them to the entrance, and showing them to each other in the grey glimmer of that cloudy afternoon, "our little accounts are now closed for the present, and my business with you ends. You are at liberty to depart. Deslow, do not hate too bitterly this man for betraying you into my hands. Remember that you set the example of treachery, and that the cause to which you are both sworn is itself founded on treachery. As for you, Mr. Bythewood, I trust that you will pardon the inconvenience I have found it necessary to subject you to. I have restrained you of your liberty for some days. You restrained me of mine for nearly as many years. I have no longer any ill-will towards either of you. Go in peace."

He led them to the opening of the cave. Then he pointed to the clouds. "You cannot see the sun; but the sun is there. You do not see God through the troubled affairs of this world; but God is over all. He governs, although you have left Him quite out of your plans. Your plans

are, no doubt, very great and mighty—but see!"—passing over his knee the cord with which Bythewood had been bound. "This is the chain with which you bind my brothers and sisters. It is strong. You have drawn it very tight about them. But you thought to draw it tighter still, to hold them fast for ever, and look—you have broken it!"

Uttering these last words, he walked backwards slowly, resumed his rifle and lantern, and disappeared in the dark recesses of the cave. The freed prisoners then, joining Pepperill, took their way slowly down the mountain, sadder if not wiser men.

The reappearance of Bythewood was a signal for sending immediately two full companies to capture the cave. They succeeded; but they captured nothing else. Pomp, escaping through the sink, was already miles away on the trail of the refugees.

Thus ends the story of Cudjo's Cave.

We may add, however, that Mr. Villars, Virginia, and Toby arrived safely at their destination—a small town on the borders of Ohio—where they were cordially welcomed by relatives of the family. There, three weeks later, they were visited by two very suspicious-looking characters—one a bronzed and bearded young man, robust, rough, with an eye like an eagle's gleaming from under his slouched hat, whom nobody, I am sure, would ever have taken for a Quaker schoolmaster; the other a stout, ruddy, blue-eyed, laughing, ragged lad of sixteen, who certainly did not pass for a rebel deserter.

With these two Barber Jim had journeyed as far as Cincinnati, where he found his family comfortably provided for by persons to whose benevolence Mr. Villars had recommended them. The other refugees had also got safely over the mountains, after a march full of toils and dangers; and nearly all were now in the Federal camps.

A word of Pomp. Have you read stories of a certain negro Scout, who, by his intrepidity, intelligence, and wonderful celerity of movement, rendered important services to the Army of the Cumberland? He is the man.

Dan Pepperill fell in the battle of Stone River, fighting in a cause he never loved. Bythewood, after losing his influence at home, and trying various fortunes, became attached to the staff of one notorious Roger Pryor, in whose disgrace he shared when that long-haired rebel chief was reduced to the ranks for cowardice.

As for Carl, he is now a stalwart corporal in the —th Pennsylvania regiment. He serves under a dear friend of his, known as the "Fighting Quaker," and distinguished for that rare combination of military and moral qualities which constitutes the true hero.

I regret that I cannot brighten these last pages with the halo of a wedding. But Penn had said, "Our country first!" and Virginia, heroic as he, had answered bravely, "Go!" Whether they will ever be happily united on earth, who can say? But this we know: the golden halo of the love that maketh one has crowned their united souls, and, with perfect patience and perfect trust, they wait.

["THE THREE SCOUTS" carries forward the story of Pomp and Carl some months later in the American Civil War.]

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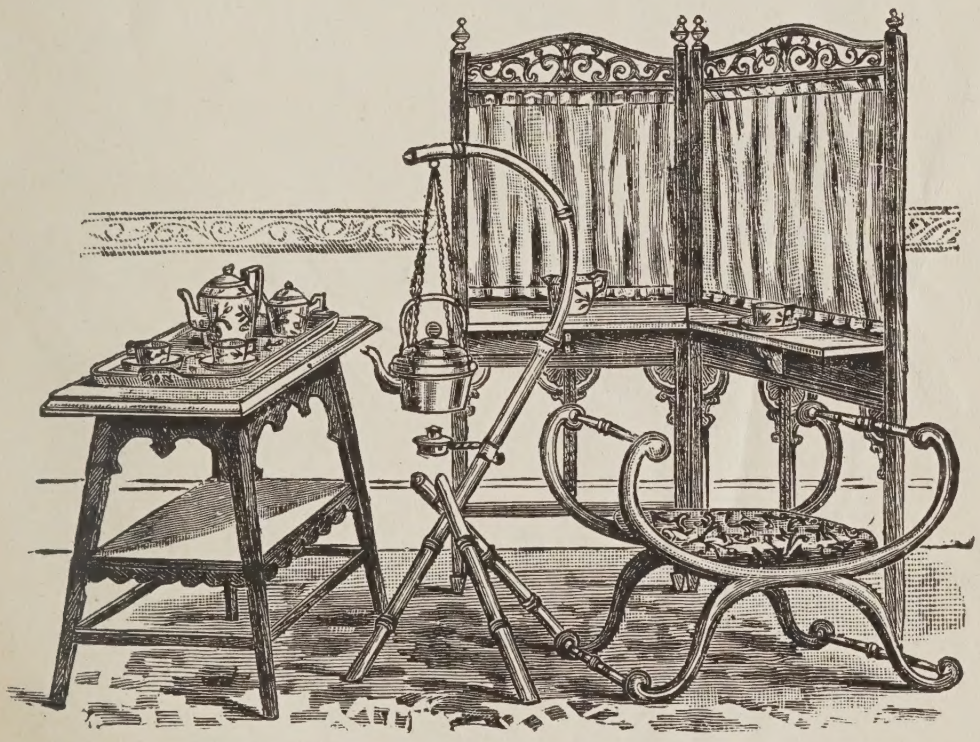

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